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Security Council

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7428th meeting

Wednesday, 15 April 2015, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mrs. Kawar	(Jordan)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Lithuania	Ms. Murmokaitė
	Malaysia	Mrs. Adnin
	New Zealand	Mr. McLay
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Spain	Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Wilson
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Ramírez Carreño

Agenda

Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203)

Letter dated 9 April 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/243)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Women and peace and security

Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203)

Letter dated 9 April 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2015/243)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, El Salvador, Germany, Guatemala, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Rwanda, Slovenia, the Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Viet Nam and Zimbabwe to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict; and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin, NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following individuals to participate in this meeting: Mr. Thomas Mayr-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, and Mr. Téte António, Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations.

I propose that the Council invite the Permanent Observer of the Observer State of the Holy See to the United Nations to participate in the meeting, in accordance with the provisional rules of procedure and previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/203, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence. I wish to also draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/243, which contains a letter dated 9 April 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Jordan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, transmitting a concept note on the item under consideration.

I now give the floor to Ms. Bangura.

Ms. Bangura: I wish to thank the Government of Jordan for hosting this open debate, which comes at a crucial moment of consolidation for this agenda, as well as the Council for the priority it has given this issue for several years.

I am grateful that my sister Hamsatu Allamin is able to join us today, giving voice to civil society, which represents a moral compass for this mandate. I also wish to acknowledge the presence of Vian Dakhil of the Yazidi community and Member of Parliament in Iraq. I am glad that she will speak on behalf of her country at this debate.

It has been three years since I assumed my role as the Secretary-General's Special Representative, and I could hardly have imagined how heartbreaking this mission would be. The horrors suffered by the women, children and men whom I have encountered reaffirm my absolute conviction that sexual violence in conflict represents a great moral issue of our time and merits the concerted focus of the Security Council. This crime, in its destruction of the individual and the pervasive way it undermines the prospects for peace and development, casts a long shadow over our collective humanity.

However, five years after the creation of the mandate, I believe that we find ourselves at a new juncture, with a possibility to turn back the tide of these atrocities. We have an opportunity to change, irrevocably, not only the way in which this crime is perceived and understood, but also, crucially, the manner in which we respond to it in our security and justice sectors, and in terms of services for survivors.

We are beginning to see some tangible and positive changes on the ground, which should convince us that our fight to eradicate sexual violence in conflict is not a "mission impossible". We have a solid normative foundation and increasingly precise tools to drive this agenda on the ground. Our knowledge, analysis and information are deeper and serve as a basis for strategic interventions at all levels. Greater resources are being dedicated to sexual and gender-based violence programming on the ground than ever before, although the resources still fall far short of the challenges we face.

We are finally beginning to see some accountability for a crime that has historically been largely cost-free to commit. This is exemplified by important legislative reforms, the criminalization of rape at national level, and an increase in national and international prosecutions. National authorities in some key situations of concern are beginning to take ownership and exhibit the leadership required to address conflict-related sexual violence in a purposeful and sustainable manner. This includes structured commitments undertaken at the highest levels of Government, and the adoption of specific plans of action by national security institutions.

Over the past three years, we have witnessed a significant increase in the number of peace agreements and ceasefire frameworks that explicitly reflect conflict-related sexual violence concerns, which is crucial to ensuring that survivors have services and redress in the aftermath of conflict and that perpetrators are excluded from power and held to account. The notion of reparations for survivors is also beginning to take root, and we are seeing some examples of transformative reparations programmes coming on-line, and some survivors receiving reparations. However, we still have a long road ahead to ensure that women have consistent and timely redress, including the necessary livelihood support to enable them to pick up the pieces of their lives.

This year's report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203), which I am honoured to present, highlights shocking incidents of sexual violence in 19 situations of concern, as well as some of these positive developments. The interagency network United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, which I Chair, continues to be the primary consultation forum for the report, and the depth of information and analysis this year represents an important marker of progress in itself. I would like to note that women protection advisers, where they are deployed, have contributed significantly to deepening the information base for the report. I am pleased that two of our senior women protection advisers, currently serving in Mali and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, are here today and will have the chance to interact directly with Council delegations and concerned Member States this week.

The text before the Council serves not only as an annual report of record, but also as a global advocacy instrument and vehicle for refining our common understanding of critical themes to enhance coordination and build global consensus. This year's report raises a number of themes and brings to light new dimensions of this issue. There is a focus on sexual violence as a threat used to induce displacement and as a risk faced by civilians, particularly women and girls, in displacement settings. It is linked to forced dispossession of land and property, which denies women vital sources of livelihood. It highlights the vulnerability and targeting of ethnic and religious minorities, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex individuals by armed groups, to impose morality and exert social control.

Forced marriage, which entails repeated sexual abuse and increases in times of conflict, features prominently throughout the report. It touches on the role of community, faith-based leaders and local journalists in addressing harmful social norms, and helping to redirect the stigma of rape from the victims to the perpetrators. The report emphasizes throughout the narrative the necessity of addressing this issue in ceasefire and mediation processes as an integral part of our response to sexual violence, preventing relapse into conflict and fostering a durable, inclusive peace.

Tomorrow, I will depart for my first visit to the Middle East, on a mission that will take me to Syria and Iraq, as well as to the neighboring countries of Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, which continue to bear the weight of massive flows of refugees fleeing conflict. The visit is undertaken against the backdrop of a catastrophic new trend in the use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror by extremist groups, not only in Iraq and Syria, but also in Somalia, Nigeria and Mali.

The Secretary-General's report, for the first time, articulates how sexual violence is integrally linked to the strategic objectives, ideology and funding of extremist groups, and notes therefore that women's empowerment and sexual violence prevention should be central to the international response. This represents a critical new challenge for the conflict-related sexual violence agenda. I would like to underscore the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Al-Qaida/Islamic

State in Iraq and the Levant sanctions committee includes sexual violence as part of its designation criteria, and begins to focus on sexual violence as a tactic of terrorism. But ultimately, an effective counter-strategy must include intensive community-level engagement, including with women and civil society, youth groups, and traditional and faith-based leaders.

It should be noted that, of the 45 parties listed in the annex of this year's report, the vast majority are non-State actors. Therefore, we will have to consider the political and operational challenges that lie ahead in terms of engaging with some of these parties, for concrete and time-bound commitments in line with resolution 2106 (2013). My Office has begun to explore engagement with a number of non-State actors, and I look forward to the opportunity to brief the Council in the future on progress and challenges in this crucial area.

Since the adoption of resolution 1820 (2008), we have been able to successfully frame this issue as a peace and security concern that requires an operational security response. I believe that more focused engagement of security sector actors will help to turn the tide on this crime. It will require us to articulate more precisely the role that security sector actors can play and to transform military cultures to enhance protection and prevention.

Over the past two years, we have signed frameworks of cooperation with the African Union and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, and are now moving along similar lines with the League of Arab States. At the same time, a number of regional organizations, including the AU and NATO, have appointed special representatives and envoys on women, peace and security. This represents an important expansion of the circle of stakeholders, and challenges us to ensure coordination and coherence in our collective action.

Since I assumed my role, one of my key objectives for the mandate has been to foster national ownership, leadership and responsibility. I am encouraged that, since 2012, the Governments of Angola, Guinea, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia and South Sudan have signed joint communiqués with the United Nations, outlining priority areas of intervention to address sexual violence. These commitments have been undertaken at the highest levels of Government and are the basis for implementation plans that are now being developed by national authorities, in concert with the United Nations and other partners.

The United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict has been instrumental in supporting national authorities to catalyse implementation through technical and institutional capacity-strengthening. The role of United Nations Action is also crucial, particularly in supporting the development and implementation of comprehensive national strategies to combat sexual violence and deliver multisectoral services to survivors. It is essential that both the Team of Experts and United Nations Action receive the financial support necessary to sustain those efforts.

Since my last briefing to the Council (see S/PV.7160), I have undertaken follow-up missions to the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and visited South Sudan and Colombia for the first time. I intend to continue the intensive engagement of the mandate in situations of concern so as to turn the resolutions of the Council into solutions on the ground.

Progress at the national level is crucial and indicates that addressing conflict-related sexual violence is possible even under challenging circumstances. It is essential that both the Team of Experts and UN Action receive the necessary financial support to sustain these efforts.

I believe that the modest progress that we are beginning to witness should be an encouragement to all of us to stay the course and reinforce our efforts. At the same time, the catastrophic circumstances and the acute vulnerability of so many women, children and men to sexual violence in conflict situations around the world must now crystallize our resolve into clear action to prevent those crimes and to care for survivors.

It is essential that we translate promises into practice. As the report states, the era of silence has been replaced by international recognition that the shame of rape resides not in the victims but in the perpetrators, and in any party that seeks to condone or conceal their conduct.

The history of war-zone rape has been a history of denial. It is time to bring these crimes, and those who commit them, into the spotlight of international scrutiny and to send a clear message that the world will not tolerate the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war and terror.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Bangura for her briefing.

I now give the floor to Ms. Allamin.

Ms. Allamin: Today I wish to draw global attention to the plight of women and girls in Nigeria's north-east, a region that has been the centre of a two-year insurgency. Yesterday we marked the one-year anniversary of the abduction of 276 girls from Chibok. Two hundred and nineteen of them remain missing, even as the whole world has been asking our authorities to bring back our girls. The most recent estimate is that approximately 2,000 women and girls have been kidnapped by armed men since the start of 2014, a much higher number than is currently receiving attention. They are stripped naked so that they cannot escape, forced into marriage and repeatedly raped.

On behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, and as the regional manager of the Nigeria Stability and Reconciliation Program and as a national executive member of the Federation of Muslim Women's Associations in Nigeria, I am here to implore the Security Council and the international community to develop integrated solutions in partnership with women's groups and service providers. Such solutions should prevent conflict-related sexual violence, protect those at risk, provide comprehensive support to survivors, promote gender perspectives and women's voices, prosecute those responsible and take action to strengthen the rights of women and girls. In addition, women's meaningful participation in peace and security processes must be a core component of any effort to effectively reduce and address incidents of conflict-related sexual violence.

Fighting extremism and ending violent conflicts must prioritize the promotion of State and global responsibilities to uphold international standards. That means ensuring accountability for human rights violations, including all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, and enshrining gender equality at all levels.

State and non-State armed groups in my country — as in Somalia, the Sudan, South Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Burma and many other places — are perpetrating acts of sexual and gender-based violence on women, girls, men and boys. That has a devastating impact on sustainable peace and development. In Iraq, sexual and gender-based violence committed by the extremist group Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham may amount to crimes against humanity. Likewise in my country, Nigeria, witnesses last month reported that dozens of women who had previously been forced to marry insurgents were killed by their "husbands" to prevent them from either escaping or being rescued and eventually marrying soldiers or other so-called non-believers.

Efforts to prevent all forms of conflict-related violence will not succeed without women's leadership and participation. Women human rights defenders and local civil society representatives in north-eastern Nigeria are negotiating and mediating with armed groups, rescuing women and girls in the occupied territories and providing rescued survivors with assistance and support. I cannot stress enough the importance of coupling international efforts with those that are already happening at the grass-roots level.

Community organizations must be involved in the provision of immediate and long-term support services, and be supported to create safe spaces where women and girls can openly discuss their experiences and share their coping strategies. Often, survivors and their families do not want to be identified. They fear retribution and stigmatization, and they feel alone. Coordination is also required to ensure that specialized and confidential survivor-centred medical, psychosocial and economic support is available. Member States must also commit to removing barriers that prevent many survivors, particularly those who are displaced, from accessing the medical care required by their condition on a non-discrimminatory basis.

In addition, I urge the Security Council and Member States to ensure the establishment of comprehensive justice strategies that ensure investigations, reporting and reparation provisions. Those must be in line with international humanitarian and human rights law and comply with ethical and safety guidelines. Immunity must not be granted for sexual and gender-based violence or any other serious human rights violations, whether in legislation or peace agreements. In Nigeria, therefore, we need a formal process to determine the total number of women and girls who have been abducted to date. Those still missing must be found and supported, and the perpetrators and sponsors of those crimes must be brought to justice.

Out of the horrible ordeals that we have suffered and witnessed has come the transformation of Nigerian women as peacebuilders. Women who were the most marginalized, poor and illiterate are now mobilizing. They are active citizens who speak on community radio and are establishing safe spaces and peace clubs that train other women and survivors, equipping them with life skills and linking them to microfinancing bodies. The international community should support those growing efforts.

Organizations such as my own are advocating and building awareness in Nigeria for the full integration of resolution 1325 (2000) and the women and peace and security agenda into domestic policies and legislation. In addition, we need international attention and support for the implementation and resourcing of Nigeria's national action plan. Member States should ensure that development assistance to Nigeria helps increase educational opportunities for girls, combats gender-based and other forms of discrimination, keeps schools safe, builds the capacity of women leaders in girls' education, improves health care for women and girls and supports and empowers local women civil society. Women's meaningful and active participation must be prioritized in all efforts aimed at addressing the underlying causes of conflict-related sexual violence and broader conflict management, prevention and resolution, as well as post-conflict strategies. Such strategies must also address the proliferation of drugs and corruption and the absence of the rule of law, and curb the flow of small arms and light weapons, which have been linked to conflict-related sexual violence. States should ratify and implement the Arms Trade Treaty, which requires exporting parties to take into account the risk of conventional arms being used to commit or facilitate serious acts of gender-based violence.

It is important to acknowledge the recent peaceful elections in Nigeria, which have brought hope for stability. The incoming President must address the general system and the institutional failures in the country. Permit me to use this opportunity to also call on the Security Council and all Member States to encourage the Nigerian and neighbouring Governments to explore alternative options for dialogue with the non-violent members of the insurgency, including those who were forcibly conscripted and those who are yearning for peace and an end to violence. I am sure there are many who are willing to lay down their arms, but lack an alternative.

We have all seen the violence in my country spill over into neighbouring States. Women in our part of the country are not included, and our voices have been marginalized from discussions relating to peace and security in the region. My country, and particularly the region I live in — the north-eastern part of Nigeria — will experience peace, security and stability only when we, the women, are empowered to be active citizens in society.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Ms. Allamin for her briefing, especially on the issue of the girls in Nigeria, one that has attracted the attention of the entire world.

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): Thank you, Madam President, for organizing today's debate. We appreciate greatly the remarks and leadership of Special Representative Zainab Bangura and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin on the critical issue of combatting sexual violence in conflict.

Fifteen years ago this October, the Security Council acknowledged the critical importance of women in the maintenance of international peace and security. This October the Council will convene at the ministerial level to take stock of our progress over the past 15 years and determine a way forward.

As we look ahead to the high-level review in October, today's debate can be seen as an opportunity to assess the progress made and the challenges ahead of us related to protection against conflict-related sexual violence. As we know from experience, women and children are disproportionately affected by such violence, and the use of sexual violence as a tool of war too often serves to marginalize women and obstruct their participation in peace processes. Over the past several years, the international community has galvanized around this issue, denouncing the culture of impunity surrounding sexual violence and supporting judicial and legal reforms among other interventions.

We have seen progress in that regard, but there is much more that remains to be done. Special Representative Bangura has demonstrated admirable leadership in tackling this difficult issue head on. Her personal efforts, along with those of many individuals here today, have already resulted in significant changes in the way we approach conflict-related sexual violence. Women leaders have been dynamic agents for change in combating sexual violence, and we are inspired by their work around the world. They not only support survivors in their work, but also promote prevention, recovery and resilience through efforts that champion women's active participation in decision-making in society. They are women such as Landy, a 28-year-old law student in Haiti, who volunteered with a Unites States-funded programme and has since committed herself to using the law as an important tool for preventing violence, and Sri Lankan peace activist Shreen Saroor, who, through her non-governmental organization, has fostered critical grass-roots peacebuilding and reconciliation activities and provided essential support for survivors of sexual violence. And in the Central African Republic, our efforts to support survivors' recovery through economic empowerment are intricately tied to ensuring the future safety and protection of those courageous women.

Across the world we are working with women through leadership programmes, small grants and professional training to demand better, safer lives through legislation that protects the rights of women and men from gender-based violence. Unfortunately, there are severe gaps in many local justice systems and international accountability that must be remedied in order to hold all perpetrators accountable.

At the June 2014 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, representatives from over 120 different countries committed to strengthening accountability. They agreed that the way forward must include capacity-building and a focus on the rule of law in order to create a sustainable and secure system of justice. The United States unveiled its new accountability initiative at the June Summit, which supports specialized justice sector mechanisms and reflects our commitment to move sexual violence out of the shadows and into the sphere of justice.

However, we must not forget that we have come a long way. In the period since the Council took up the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in resolution 1820 (2008), many Member States have made significant strides, as demonstrated by the Secretary-General's recent report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203). Of the five States cited as having security forces suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape or other forms of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict that are on the Security Council's agenda, four have committed to adopting specific measures to address conflict-related sexual violence.

Unsurprisingly, the Syrian armed forces, intelligence services and pro-Government forces stand apart from international norms in that regard. Among the violations faced by Syrians daily are reports of sexual violence against women, men, girls and boys in flight, house searches, checkpoints and, especially, detention.

A significant challenge also lies in curtailing the violence and crimes of non-State actors, such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Daesh. These groups utilize conflict-related sexual violence not only to terrorize women and children, but as a war tactic to suppress opposition and punish those whose beliefs differ. Sexual and gender-based violence has become an ingrained aspect of their overall strategy for controlling territory, destroying the social fabric and recruiting new supporters.

Yesterday marked the one-year anniversary of the kidnapping of 276 girls from Chibok in Nigeria and, heartbreakingly, as Ms. Allamin has just reported, their fates remain, for the most part, unknown. Boko Haram's gross violence against women and girls — abduction and rape, often exercised under the cover of false terms, such as "marriage", or the use of girls as suicide bombers — is a symbol of its toxic ideology. In Iraq, the devastating plight of minority communities rocked by ISIL, especially the sexual slavery faced by women and girls, is a call to action.

As so compellingly detailed by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura, the tools at the disposal of the international community require further refinement in the approach to non-State actors. The threat of prosecution, while necessary, does not, by itself, deter groups like Boko Haram or ISIL, nor are such groups necessarily responsive to international censure. Consequently, we must consider stronger, more innovative and more aggressive approaches to address the use of sexual violence by those groups. I invite the United Nations Secretariat and the international community to think thoroughly about that challenge and to join us in New York in October with a renewed commitment to stopping the sexual predations committed by non-State actors.

We also applaud the Secretary-General for including in his report the disproportionate and unique impact of sexual violence on the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. Pre-existing political disenfranchisement, social exclusion and violence against LGBT individuals intensifies in situations of conflict, often with complete impunity. Where individuals are targeted for conflict-related sexual violence based on their real or perceived identity, it is not only appropriate but necessary for the United Nations and the international community to identify ways to halt such predation. We must protect all people from the crimes of sexual violence and improve measures to protect those most at risk. Preventing sexual violence is not about politics. It is about our common humanity and about respect. We must all stand united in taking urgent action to combat sexual violence in conflict and in reaching out to support survivors around the world.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Jordanian presidency for convening today's important debate on sexual violence in conflict, which represents a long-standing and urgent priority for France. I also thank Ms. Bangura and Ms. Allamin for their briefings and for their exemplary activities.

Exactly one year and one day ago, on 14 April 2014, 276 highschool girls were kidnapped by Boko Haram in Chibok, Nigeria. We still have had no word on those young girls, who, like other women and girls abducted by that terrorist group, have been subjected to sexual violence and forced marriage and reduced to slavery, assuming that they have not been sold outright. The plight of those young Nigerians is unfortunately shared by thousands of other young girls, women and children.

The widespread sexual violence being perpetrated by extremist non-State groups is a daily assault on our most basic values. In the Middle East and in Africa, it has become the signature of extremist and terrorist armed groups that seek to dehumanize targeted, terrified communities. Daesh, for instance, has aimed its sexual violence against women and girls on the basis of their ethnicity, their sexual orientation or their influence within their communities. In August 2014, during the attacks in Sinjar in northern Iraq, hundreds of Yazidi women were abducted and sold in Syria as sexual slaves. I welcome the opportunity to applaud Iraqi parliamentarian Vian Dakhil for her unforgettable and moving testimony (see S.PV 7419) before this body at last month's open debate on persecuted minorities in the Middle East, which was convened by the French presidency. Some 2,500 women and children from the Yazidi, Christian, Kurd and Shabak minorities are currently being held by Daesh in northern Iraq, and that figure does not include all the women and girls who have not been identified owing to the lack of statistics that accurately reflect the reality on the ground. Still, in order to condemn such savagery and act to stop it, we must have reliable and exact data on the fate of those women and children.

Given their scale and character, the acts of sexual violence committed by extremist groups demand a specific response. First of all, the Security Council should support the recommendation of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative calling for sexual violence to be categorized as a terror tactic and not merely a tactic of war, pursuant to resolution 1820 (2008).

Secondly, we must ensure effective follow-up to the addition to the Secretary-General's blacklist of 13 conflict parties accused of sexual violence, including Daesh and Boko Haram. States must do their utmost to end such acts of violence and bring the perpetrators, who until now have enjoyed virtually complete impunity, to justice. France therefore calls on all concerned States to ensure that justice at both the international and the national levels is able to proceed and to cooperate with United Nations investigation mechanisms seeking to force the perpetrators to answer for their acts.

Furthermore, once sexual violence has been categorized as a terror tactic, that new reality should be reflected in the sanctions regime against Al Qaeda. Finally, in general terms, we should pay particular attention, within the framework of the Coalition against terrorism and the fight against terrorism, to the risks of imminent sexual violence wherever communities, minorities and children are concerned.

Acts of sexual violence committed by violent extremist groups, however barbaric, should not let us forget those committed by other actors. I would like first to address the responsibility of State actors. True, there has been notable progress in certain countries. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, has improved access to reparations for the victims of sexual violence and has allowed the prosecution of members of the national security forces. With French technical and financial assistance, the Central African authorities are in the process of setting up a rapid response unit and a special criminal tribunal to investigate human-rights violations, including sexual violence.

But such efforts are not enough. Sexual violence continues to be committed by State security forces in the Sudan, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria. Syrian women are the targets of such violence in detention centres or at the hands of the Syrian intelligence services. The responsibility of States is also essential for countries involved in peace processes. The integration of the issue of sexual violence into the Mali and the Central African Republic peace accords was a first step. In order not to undermine the credibility of those processes, we must now ensure that such provisions are effectively implemented and that individuals implicated in acts of sexual violence are not inadvertently freed.

I would now like to mention those actors implicated in such crimes in refugee centres or camps for displaced persons, where women are particularly exposed. The fear of rape is currently one of the main reasons for the flight of Syrian refugee women to neighbouring countries. It is therefore all the more critical to ensure that women have access to security and basic medical assistance in those centres. France has delivered psychological and medical support through non-governmental organizations to the victims of sexual violence in the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan and to internally displaced women in Syria, as well as to Syrian refugee women in Lebanon. We call on other States to join us in providing access to medical services to the victims of sexual violence.

Finally, I would like to recall the matter of sexual violence perpetrated by United Nations staff or by Blue Helmets. At the end of March, the Secretary-General published a report entitled "Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse" (A/69/779), which confirms that a number of peacekeeping operations employ individuals suspected of having committed acts of sexual violence or sexual abuse, even against minors. I have already said, and I repeat, that we must be especially vigilant and apply zero tolerance on this matter if we wish the United Nations to retain its credibility and serve as a model. In that context, I welcome the Secretary-General's recommendation to make predeployment gender-sensitivity training for peacekeepers a requirement across the board.

In light of the variety of actors responsible for sexual violence, both within and outside the United Nations, the solutions are well known. To mention only a few, we need to strengthen security in and around camps for refugees and internally displaced persons; increase the participation of women in peacekeeping operations, peace negotiations and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism; and guarantee financing via the United Nations general budget for women protection advisors.

The high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000) this coming October will be an opportunity for the United Nations and States to deliver on their commitments on those different points. The review should be an opportunity for everyone to ensure the greatest possible mobilization of our will, our action and our resources. The fight against sexual violence in conflict must be waged every day by the United Nations and by each and every one of us. The Council may rest assured of the firm commitment of France to the fight.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): The delegation of Angola aligns itself with the statements to be delivered by the Permanent Observer of the African Union and by the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

We commend the presidency of Jordan for convening this open debate on the critical issue of sexual violence in conflict situations under the agenda item "Women and peace and security". We praise the Secretary-General and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for their leadership and long-standing commitment to the defence and protection of victims. We also thank Ms. Hamsatu Allamin for her valuable contribution to this debate.

Sexual violence in conflict situations is one of the most egregious forms of human rights violations. As the Secretary-General points out in his latest report on this issue (S/2015/203), 2014 was marked by continuing human rights violations and crimes against the integrity of women and girls in conflict situations, including abductions, labour exploitation, forced marriages, human trafficking and sexual slavery. As referred to in the report, sexual violence perpetrated by State actors, or armed groups associated with States, is a matter of concern in many countries and territories where the rape of women and girls is used as a weapon of war and a tactic of terror. Women and girls are targeted by terrorists and armed groups linked to violent extremism as trophies of war, with the aim of humiliating and destroying entire communities, especially through ethnic cleansing, by changing the demographic composition of those communities. Additionally, through sexual violence, extremist groups terrorize communities into compliance, displace populations from strategic areas and generate revenues through trafficking, the slave trade and ransoms.

The United Nations has been pointing out that States bear the primary responsibility for the protection of the civilian population, particularly women and children, in times of peace or conflict. The Secretary-General stresses the vulnerability and increased risks endured by refugees and displaced women and girls, who face additional difficulties due to their limited access to resources and services, such as education and health care, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, and to training and sources of revenue. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure a better international response in addressing women's and girls' specific vulnerabilities.

Eliminating conflict-related sexual violence is key to addressing the root causes of gender inequality and changing the mindset of perpetrators, victims and society at large. Some progress has been achieved in the struggle since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). The Security Council has assumed a leadership role in this regard by stressing the need for a more systematic monitoring of sexual violence in armed conflict situations. It is now imperative that the United Nations continues developing appropriate response mechanisms to counter such a scourge.

The General Assembly's important Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict made recommendations, among which we highlight the following. We must ensure that all peace, security and conflict mediation processes explicitly recognize the need to prevent, respond to and reduce crimes of sexual violence; promote women's full participation in all political, governance and security structures, as well as in all decision-making processes; ensure that national military and police doctrine is in accordance with international law so as to enable a more effective-prevention and response to sexual violence in conflict; and support the deployment of national and international expertise to build national capacity to hold perpetrators to account and to improve the response to and support for victims and their access to justice.

Furthermore, the other United Nations decisions that we fully support stress the importance of, inter alia, increasing the number of women in peacekeeping missions and police units with a view to countering stigma and threats of reprisal against survivors; including specific actions to prevent conflict-related sexual violence in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; and ensuring the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in conflict resolution and peace processes.

At the regional and subregional levels, the African Union and SADC have made the protection of women's rights a priority, and have adopted measures to tackle the issue of conflict-related sexual violence and to ensure women's participation in the prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa. The Permanent Observer of the African Union and the Permanent Representative of Zimbabwe, speaking on behalf of SADC, will elaborate on what both organizations are doing in that regard.

Finally, it is crucial to prevent new such crimes and to hold perpetrators to account. Victims should be encouraged to speak out and to report violence, and their voices should be heard and respected. As we celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), we look forward to the 2015 high-level review, which will enable us to make an assessment of the progress made and the ongoing challenges in the implementation of the Council's women and peace and security agenda.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Jordanian presidency for convening this important debate on sexual violence in conflict. I also thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her briefing, and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin, for her statement.

My delegation endorses the statement that will be made by the observer of the African Union.

Yesterday, 14 April, we sadly commemorated one year of captivity of the 276 young girls kidnapped by Boko Haram in Nigeria. Since then, hundreds of others have been wrested from their families and communities for purposes of sexual violence. Sexual violence, which is characterized by rape, sexual slavery, prostitution, and forced pregnancies and sterilization, has always existed in all cultures of the world. In peace time, these acts of violence often have serious consequences while the resources to address them remain insufficient. In contrast, in time of war or conflict, the subject remains taboo and poorlu documented. The report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203), based on information collected in 19 countries where United Nations peacekeeping operations and country teams are deployed, sheds light on sexual violence in two specific cases and introduces a series of new elements that are useful to our reflection and for response.

First of all, we note that in situations of conflict there is a real mobilization with respect to this issue, whose effects and impacts are of very serious concern in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali, where thousands of people, particularly women and girls, fall victim to rape and abuse and have no access to health-care services or justice. Sexual violence is also used by terrorist armed groups as a tactic of war and terror, as we have seen in Yemen, Mali, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan and Iraq. Lastly, it results in the forced displacement of populations in certain countries.

Furthermore, significant progress has been made in developing standards in post-conflict situations, including for the provision of victims' services as well as in establishing accountability. However, as in the specific case of Liberia, the difficulty remains that many violations were committed by minors.

Despite the tragic and troubling nature of sexual violence in conflict, Chad welcomes the ever-stronger political momentum that has been built around this issue over recent years and the determined efforts by the international community and States aiming to create the conditions for victims' voices to be heard. Against the tragic scale of the situation, States are recognizing and meeting their obligations to prosecute those who perpetrate such violence and to ensure victims protection and access to justice. These obligations also extend to non-State actors, who, according to the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203), are responsible for more than 60 per cent of conflict-related sexual violence. In that regard, the report lists 45 groups, by country, credibly suspected of committing or being responsible for patterns of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Moreover, it must be underscored that sexual violence is the result of social behaviours and constitutes a violation of human rights and humanitarian law. Despite the fear of stigmatization and reprisals, it is almost universal. It is therefore crucial that victims of sexual violence be afforded justice as a means of contributing to international peace and security. In that regard, Chad encourages the international community to assist Governments to fight against impunity by developing and implementing national plans or strategies in line with international standards for fighting sexual violence.

In times of conflict, ensuring the systematic participation of women in peace processes and that sexual violence is explicitly addressed in ceasefire and peace agreements is one way of guaranteeing justice for victims. In the aftermath of conflict, the integration and participation of women in all decision-making processes, in the public and private spheres alike, will help eliminate negative social norms, reduce discrimination and promote gender equality.

Since the end of the civil war in Chad, the joint efforts of the national authorities and United Nations agencies have sought to integrate women into the national security forces, including the Gendarmerie Nationale and the National and Nomadic Guard. A quota of 30 per cent has been applied in the competitive recruitment of police officers so as to respond to the need to promote gender equality.

On the legal front, the President of the Republic recently signed an order based on the law on empowerment of the National Assembly prohibiting early marriage so as to protect the comprehensive development of young girls. Moreover, discussions focused on women's empowerment were held during national women's week in Chad and the International Women's Day, on 8 March. On that occasion, the Government inaugurated the first Maison de la femme in N'djamena.

In conclusion, let me underscore that Chad is today host to 500,000 refugees from the Central African Republic, the Sudan and Nigeria, and that the scourge of sexual violence also affects the camps where they are housed. During the debate held under the Argentine presidency last October (see S/PV.7289), we had an opportunity to set out the efforts undertaken and the progress achieved, including the establishment of early-warning systems through women's groups aimed at prevention and the protection of vulnerable populations.

Finally, I would like to highlight the fate of the 219 Nigerian girls still being held by Boko Haram, who are a daily reminder that we have not yet done enough. Despite the strong emotions that this has elicited through the worldwide media campaign, their liberation becomes ever less likely. In general terms, we need to change the mindset and our practices so as to work together to eradicate sexual violence for the sake of international peace and security.

Mr. Oyarzun Marchesi (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Madam President, for having organized this debate. I also express my gratitude to Ms. Bangura and Ms. Allamin for their moving briefings.

It is absolutely unacceptable in this day and age to hear that many women — too many women — are subjected to rape on a daily basis in order to obtain drinking water. Worse still is that this takes place in places where we have large peacekeeping operations. It is also absolutely unacceptable to read in newspapers the tragic news of Yazidi women or of the girls abducted by Boko Haram. I take these two clearly distinct examples because we need to treat them differently. I would like to propose a set of 10 measures to seek to somehow constrain this tragedy afflicting humankind. But before doing so I would like to share with the Council two preliminary reflections.

First, I think we need to modify our conventional conception of what constitutes a threat to peace and security. It is unfortunate that we have managed to coin acronyms such as "DDR", reflecting the great attention paid to demobilization and disarmament, but failed to pay sufficient attention to sexual violence in conflict. I think we need to change that.

Secondly, as the representatives of the United States and of France mentioned, sexual violence has become not just a weapon of war but of terrorism, and we must therefore make the necessary changes in the United Nations to reflect that.

As I said, I will propose a set of 10 measures aiming to eradicate this scourge. The first five are for States or situations where there is no peacekeeping operation.

First, we must spare no effort in referring to the International Criminal Court all the relevant information that exists on sexual violence in conflict, since there can be no doubt that this constitutes a crime against humanity.

Secondly, we must achieve universality — the universal understanding of sexual violence as a crime. Unfortunately, in many jurisdictions, sexual violence is merely seen as a moral failing.

Thirdly, we must pay greater attention to the treatment of victims of sexual violence so as to ensure their appropriate reintegration into society and access to basic services. In that connection, I would like to highlight the leading example of Colombia, which has done a great job in this regard, and to encourage Colombia to share its experiences with other States that have had similar experiences.

Fourthly, I would like to congratulate Ms. Bangura on the important efforts she has made, as well as to encourage her to continue in her work seeking contact with non-State actors to impart an understanding of the seriousness of these crimes. Ms. Bangura will now travel to the Middle East, as she as already to many African States, as part of her efforts to convince non-State actors and guerrillas of the seriousness of this phenomenon.

Fifthly, if we start from the idea that sexual violence is a weapon of terrorism, then, as the Ambassador of France said, we must modify the mandates of some sanctions committees, especially that dealing with Al-Qaida and the Taliban, to include these crimes.

Let me turn now to measures Spain proposes to be more effective in the fight against sexual violence in situations where there are already peacekeeping operations.

First, we need more robust mandates that specifically address sexual violence in conflict.

Secondly, we need to provide better training to our peacekeepers. Contingents must have undergone a number of specific and sufficient training courses devoted to issues of sexual violence in conflict before deploying to peacekeeping operations.

Thirdly, our peacekeeping operations should, at the command level, be in constant contact with local forces — meaning police, security forces and armies — in order to address the issue of sexual violence in conflict and provide advice in this area.

Fourthly, the Department for Peacekeeping Operations has a truly formidable task, but its relevant unit has neither the size nor the importance that, in Spain's view, it should have. I would propose, therefore, that the unit be strengthened.

Fifthly, we should ask that our special representatives systematically report on sexual violence in conflict in both formal and informal meetings of the Security Council in a strategic, as opposed to merely descriptive, manner. Many delegations have mentioned the fact that the review of resolution 1325 (2000) will come to a close in October. We need to be ambitious in that respect. The October review of resolution 1325 (2000) will fall under the Spanish presidency of the Security Council. I understand that the delegation of the United States has suggested that it be held at the ministerial level, and I can assure the Council that it will be. I trust that our rejection of sexual violence in conflict will translate into the presence of a great number of foreign ministers here in New York. I also trust that we shall be effective enough so that the girls and daughters of those women who have experienced such tragedy will one day be able to say that the United Nations has made a difference.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): I thank to Ms. Bangura and Ms. Allamin for their briefings and, above all, for the dedication and the energy that they bring to a cause to which we should all be committed.

May I also say to my colleague, the Ambassador of Spain, that if Spain intends to take an ambitious approach with regard to the review of resolution 1325 (2000), he will find ready support from this part of the table.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) paints a very grim picture. Civil conflict, the collapse of State authority, unprecedented numbers of displaced people, and the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war have all exposed more women and girls to the risk of sexual violence than at any other time in living memory. And, as if to emphasize that point and the grimness of the situation, just yesterday we marked the first anniversary of the abduction of 276 Nigerian girls by Boko Haram, of whom 219 are still missing. These are grim statistics on a very sad day.

There are many ways in which we could approach this issue, but today I am going to focus on the practical steps that might translate our collective commitments — the words of Council members around this table and the words of many others — into action, and which can result in safer environments for women and girls everywhere. United Nations peacekeeping has a crucial role to play in meeting those commitments, particularly where the capacity of national authorities has been significantly degraded, as is sadly the case in so many of the situations we must review. That role can range from active enforcement to providing support or capacity-building to national partners. All of these, wherever they are pitched, are practical steps.

New Zealand has witnessed the impact that the United Nations can have on a post-conflict setting. In Timor-Leste, the Government sought the assistance of the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) in developing community-based policing strategies in order to tackle domestic abuse and sexual violence. Initial support, through UNMIT, translated and transitioned into longer-term bilateral policing programmes; community policing and gender protection principles were integrated into Timor Leste's national legislation, well as the country's policing doctrine and training. All of that demonstrates the progress that can be made when strong, focused and determined national leadership receives targeted support from the Council and the United Nations.

We commend the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and others for developing guidance and training on preventing and responding to sexual violence, because it is important that our peacekeepers have access to that sort of guidance. In many conflict situations, barriers to women's participation in decision-making are exacerbated. Women are often excluded from conflict resolution and peacebuilding, thus undermining the effectiveness and sustainability of peace initiatives. We therefore echo the Secretary-General's call for sexual violence to be integrated into the approaches taken by the United Nations in conflict and post-conflict settings, including protection of civilians and conflict-resolution strategies, which are, again, practical steps. We also call for particular attention to be paid to combating sexual violence against displaced persons. We have more of them these days than at any time since the Second World War.

In our region, Pacific Islands Forum leaders have recognized sexual violence and violence against women as a pair of the most significant human security issues that face their communities. The Secretariat of the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police, representing 21 Member States, aims to develop practical and ethical policing standards in its member countries, including a Women's Advisory Network to support the professional development and leadership of Pacific Islands policewomen. Preventing and combatting sexual violence is ultimately a national responsibility, and one that is assumed on behalf of organizations such as the Pacific Islands Chiefs of Police.

The framework of resolution 1325 (2000) provides useful mechanisms for supporting national and local solutions, including the development of national action plans on women, peace and security. New Zealand is currently finalizing its own national action plan, which is under public consultation at this time. That plan sets out a range of initiatives tailored to our specific needs and circumstances, including tackling domestic violence, which is ever a problem in all societies. The plan also focuses on increasing the number of military and policewomen who are available for senior deployment in peacekeeping operations. Each of the steps I have outlined are small, but every small step can make a difference and, collectively, all of those differences will be important. Only if we all take such steps we can make progress against sexual violence. That is the challenge and, step by practical step, that should be our collective response.

Mr. Ramírez Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank you, Madam, for convening this important debate on a subject that arouses the interest of so many countries. We would also like to express our gratitude for the work and briefings of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, and of Ms. Allamin.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela condemns sexual violence in armed conflict because it is a crime against human dignity. We reject the abduction of women and girls, who are abused, sexually enslaved and subjected to massive abuses that may cause their death. In that regard, my country urges all parties to conflict to respect the norms and provisions of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights, as well as the relevant resolutions of the Security Council on this topic.

The abominable crimes that are committed in situations of armed conflict are not new and do not always follow a single pattern; rather, they change according to circumstance, as do their perpetrators, whether State or non-State actors. That is why it is important that the strategies implemented to prevent and eradicate sexual violence in armed conflict take into account the specific context and confront the root causes of conflict situations, including any political, religious, ethnic, cultural or other underlying causes of the sexual violence suffered by women and girls. Women can no longer be seen as spoils of war or made subject to violence or oppression in any society or in any circumstances. Ensuring that efforts to prevent and eradicate such crimes are as effective as possible requires coordination and synergy between the States concerned, all the relevant United Nations bodies and the various regional and subregional mechanisms.

The Secretary-General's 2014 report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203) refers to 45 parties suspected of committing acts of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict, 13 of which appear for the first time. My country urges that those parties be investigated and the perpetrators brought before the appropriate tribunals. There should be no impunity for this type of crime, which we agree in many instances should be termed a crime of terror. We are particularly concerned about the increasing rates of atrocities and sexual violence in armed conflicts as examples of systematic action on the part of extremist groups, and about the fact that this phenomenon is directly related to the training, equipping and encouraging of non-State groups, designed to promote the break-up of States for political reasons and thereby contribute to the collapse of their institutions and turn them into fertile ground for impunity and the perpetration of atrocities that violate human dignity, including sexual violence.

All of this prevents sufficient care and protection from being provided to survivors and their families, and raises obstacles to achieving accountability. If the ban on providing such groups with arms and financial support were respected in accordance with international law, the ability of non-State agents to operate would decrease along with rates of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict. Once again, we call on the international community to take measures to bring to justice those responsible for giving military and financial aid to extremist and terrorist groups.

The report also notes that sexual violence is frequently not denounced because of the risks faced by the surviving victims and their families and witnesses. Most victims of sexual violence are stigmatized and ostracized and have little access to justice. That is why we should join forces to environment sure that, while fully respecting the sovereignty of the States concerned, national institutional capacities, particularly health-care, judicial and social welfare systems, can be developed and strengthened in order to provide appropriate, timely care and rehabilitation to the women and child who are the victims or fruit of such violence.

We believe it is important that the issue of sexual violence be considered in peace processes and ceasefire agreements, as well as in all demobilization and reintegration processes involving the United Nations. The mediators and special envoys dealing with such processes should possess the information and training necessary to gauge the most relevant ways to address the issues based on the specific circumstances. We must also continue to work to improve preparation for all staff deployed on the ground and to increase the presence of gender experts and women protection advisers on mission staff. We appreciate the work being done by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, and we also believe that information and awareness-raising campaigns can have a positive effect on communities by enabling them to understand their rights and the ways in which they can demand justice.

My country supports the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations on incidents of sexual violence that have occurred or may occur in any of its operations. The Organization should be firm and consistent regarding the importance of accountability for staff who commit such offences. In that regard, compliance with the provisions of resolution 1325 (2000), as well as ensuring women's participation in preventing and settling conflicts, is particularly essential. We believe that women's participation at every level, stage and area related to political missions and peacekeeping operations will produce a more appropriate, assertive and comprehensive approach to the issue.

In conclusion, 2015 is significant because it is a year in which some important mechanisms are coming due that will enable us to renew our commitments and act decisively to combat such barbarities. The sustainable development agenda, the twentieth anniversary review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the strategic review of peacekeeping operations and the global review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) are all opportunities that we should sieze in order to arrive at a more accurate picture of the issue and help to adopt appropriate measures for addressing it.

Ms. Murmokaitė (Lithuania): Ms. Bangura's task is indeed a tough one, but her leadership provides a lifeline for many affected by monstrous crimes such as these. Our appreciation also goes to Ms. Hamsatu Allamin for her contribution to today's debate.

Brutal and barbaric sexual violence as a weapon of war is scarily cheap and effective. It is used to intimidate, change local demographics, attack ethnic and religious minorities, seize land and clear access to scarce resources and force entire communities into submission. With the emergence of Da'esh and Boko Haram, public gang rape, sexual slavery, the sale of women and girls as young as pre-teens and forced impregnations and abortions have become trademarks of the wanton and depraved reign of terror. A report released by Amnesty International in December details the abominable suffering of Yazidi women and girls under Da'esh. A girl is quoted in that report describing her attempt, with a fellow captive, to take her own life.

> "We tied scarves around our necks and pulled away from each other as hard as we could until I fainted. I could not speak for several days after that."

Like her, many captives of terrorist groups prefer suicide to suffering the savage abuse and consequences of rape. Even in modern societies, rape victims can be slow to speak out, and rape is often underreported. With all the care and services available, it takes years for victims to heal. Imagine rape victims in countries where services are non-existent and social norms ostracize and punish the victims of rape, not the perpetrators. Of course, rape victims will choose to keep silent when those who rape them are from the ranks of local authorities, police or armed forces; where reporting a crime may expose the victim and her family to additional attacks; where rape victims are forced to marry their rapists and punished for moral crimes or where sexual abuse is committed by peacekeepers — those who by their very definition are expected to protect, not to abuse. The Secretary-General's reports and those of various human rights bodies repeatedly point to such problems, and while in many cases significant progress has been made at the normative level, both nationally and internationally, the gap between the law and reality on the ground remains wide.

We all agree that the responsibility to protect civilian populations, including from rape and sexual violence as a tactic of war, lies first and foremost with the State. Having judicial and penal frameworks adequate to that end is essential, as is making sure that national civilian and military justice systems comply fully with international legal and human-rights standards. But where that responsibility is not lived up to, whether for lack of resources, capacity or political will, it is imperative that the perpetrators of mass-atrocity crimes, including those involving sexual violence, be held to account through existing international justice mechanisms, including the International Criminal Court (ICC). Human rights monitoring, reporting of peacekeeping mission human rights and gender components, independent commissions of inquiry, and rapid deployment of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to situations of particular concern can all be instrumental in bringing perpetrators to account. As a founding party to the ICC, Lithuania calls for the universal application of the Rome Statute, as it recognizes sexual violence offences as crimes against humanity.

Ensuring accountability for conflict-related sexual crimes and for sexual and gender-based crimes in general is key to prevention. The perpetrators must know their heinous acts will carry consequences. The Council should be more vocal and systematic in its condemnation of conflict-related sexual violence and demand credible investigations of all allegations of sexual violence committed in conflict zones, be they allegations against Government-affiliated forces, armed groups or United Nations peacekeepers, and use sanctions to this effect. When signals of rape reach us, we cannot afford to ignore them or brush them under the carpet. Our silence and equivocations inflict additional wounds on the victims and only serve to embolden the perpetrators.

On the protection side, the deployment of women protection advisers, the provision of human rights and gender-awareness training for staff to be deployed in peacekeeping missions and the inclusion of sexual violence issues in the drafting or renewal of peacekeeping mandates have proven useful and should be further expanded. To change the calculus, more women peacekeepers need to be deployed. While the Secretariat's efforts to address this gap merits our full support, respective troop- and police-contributing countries can contribute a great deal.

A policy of due diligence must be applied and fully implemented. The much-too-easy availability of small arms and light weapons in conflict and post-conflict situations adds to the already high risks faced by civilians, including an increased threat of sexual violence. Lithuania intends next month to hold an open debate on the human costs of small arms and light weapons that will aim to identify means by which the Council could more systematically take into account small arms and light weapons-related threats, including their exacerbating effect on sexual and gender-based violence.

Ensuring that gender considerations are given due attention, the creation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and security sector reform programmes; the systematic integration of gender-based violence into designation criteria of sanctions regimes; and improving the collection of disaggregated data are just a few examples of where further advances are needed. In a wider context, the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty that oblige States to take into account the risks of arms being used to commit or facilitate gender-based violence before issuing export licenses must be robustly implemented.

One should also bear in mind that while women and girls are usually the first victims of conflict-related sexual violence, rape as a weapon of war is also used against men and boys to humiliate, break down the morale, intimidate and subjugate. Taking into consideration the distinct roles of women protection advisers and gender advisers, systematic deployment of both in conflict zones remains essential. Male rape victims should also be accorded all necessary support and treatment. In particular, the stigmatization and integration of children born out of conflict-related sexual violence and rape need to be addressed delicately but seriously to prevent lingering marginalization and animosities that may ultimate explode in unrest and renewed conflict.

As Special Representative Bangura noted, national, regional and subregional cooperation mechanisms are very important. They should continue to actively engage in promoting effective responses to conflict-related sexual crimes, including through awareness campaigns, action plans, cooperation frameworks, capacity-building and shared good practices. Next week, Lithuania will host a regional conference together with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and UN-Women on the review of the women and peace and security agenda, providing a good opportunity to address these issues as well.

Finally, prevention requires inclusion — inclusion of women, minorities and vulnerable groups — in a full and meaningful way in all conflict resolution, post-conflict reconciliation and peacebuilding processes as active contributors and not merely as a token presence at the negotiating table. Their equal participation will contribution significantly to building the enduring peace that will break the cycles of violence, including gender-based violence.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we would like to thank you, Madam, for convening today's meeting and express our gratitude to the guest briefers for their participation in it and their assessment of the current situation in the fight against sexual violence in armed conflict.

Separately, we recognize the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, whose actions have brought about considerable progress in work in this area.

We have carefully studied the report prepared for today's meeting (S/2015/203), which attests to the great amount of work done by the Special Representative in the past year. Unfortunately, the problem of sexual violence remains relevant, particularly in individual conflict situations where such crimes are widespread. Such situations require attention from the Security Council. At the same time, we support the activities of a range of other bodies of the United Nations system that, within their remit, are engaged in the subject of sexual violence in broader terms. The Security Council should not duplicate these efforts.

We note the report's definition of conflict-related sexual violence. As such, the report departs from the terminology of the Security Council resolution on this issue, beginning with resolution 1820 (2008), and diverges from the very language of today's debate on sexual violence in conflict. Such attempts to revise previously agreed language and in general to broaden our approach to the subject are of concern to us.

Issues related to the struggle against sexual violence in armed conflict should be seen as one component of the entire range of measures to achieve conflict resolution and post-conflict recovery. Women and children frequently fall victim of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including the indiscriminate or excessive use of force. They suffer from terrorist acts and become refugees and internally displaced persons. As a result, any discussion of the women and peace and security agenda in the Security Council must be comprehensive and include such issues as countering sexual violence as a way of fighting other forms of crime against women, as provided for in resolution 1325 (2000). The perpetrators of such crimes must, after due investigation in accordance with the requirements of international law and national legislation, be brought to justice.

The section of the Secretary-General's report on the problem of sexual violence in the context of violent extremism is crucial. The danger of this scourge has become increasingly serious. A year ago, we were witness to the tragedy in the Nigerian city of Chibok, where terrorists from the Boko Haram group kidnapped 276 school girls. Many of these girls have yet to be found. Regrettably, this example is not unique. Such crimes must be stopped.

Sexual violence in armed conflict cannot be fought without the active involvement of national authorities in the process. There is a reason why the Secretary-General's report focuses in particular on the need for national involvement and the assumption of leadership roles and responsibilities by States. Contacts with non-State armed groups must be carried out in accordance with Security Council resolutions and other regulatory instruments of the United Nations. We appreciate the approach of the authors of the report, who have specifically addressed a considerable portion of the recommendations in the fight against sexual violence to national Governments. Gains in the Secretariat in this area, such as the guidance note on reparations for conflict-related sexual violence, serve as frameworks for States to use, taking into account their national specifics and legislation.

With respect to the matrix of early warning indicators of sexual violence, we are cautious with respect to such indicators, particularly since sexual violence in and of itself is far from always being a source of emerging armed conflict. On balance, we believe that the recommendations of the report should focus on approaches that have been worked out and approved within the United Nations and not on those that advance other initiatives or instruments elaborated by a limited number of participants without the support of decisions taken by United Nations bodies.

Mr. Wilson (United Kingdom): I thank you, Madam, for convening today's important debate and for giving it a lot of publicity through Twitter.

I welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/203), which is a vital framework for all of us. I particularly want to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura for her briefing and her brave and tireless work alongside the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. She is an example to all of us, and every time she speaks she gives us new energy in this fight.

I also want to pay particular tribute to Ms. Hamsatu Allamin. What she said just now is important testimony for all of us. I was particularly struck by how she talked about how she was using the resolutions of the Security Council, including resolution 1325 (2000), to make a real difference on the ground. That is a reminder to all of us of what this is all about. We are working together, creating norms and a sense of energy that allow people to take real action on the ground to change people's lives in this important and very controversial area.

As you said, Madam President, the timing of this debate is tragically apt. One year ago yesterday, when 276 schoolgirls were kidnapped by Boko Haram in Chibok, the abduction shocked the world. Abductions, enslavement, sexual abuse and forced marriage of women and girls are central to Boko Haram's method of operation. As the fight against Boko Haram continues, we reiterate our support to colleagues from Nigeria and Chad and to all affected Member States in the region. This anniversary is a stark reminder of the task that we face to end conflict-related sexual violence.

The Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in summer 2014 in London, led to a number of ambitious commitments, and I would like to highlight just three of them: first, the African Union's launch of a pilot project in the Central African Republic; secondly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo's commitment to implement its action plan; and thirdly, a number of countries signing up to the call for action on protecting women and girls in emergencies. Those are just some of the issues that we have worked hard on with others to implement and deliver real change in the countries that are worst affected.

The rise of extremist non-State actors such as Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant is now one of the greatest threats to our goal, as others have said. Sexual violence has become a tactic of their terror. There are three keys ways that we can fight this.

First, we need to do more to support affected countries. The needs of survivors are great. The report (S/2015/203) highlights that more medical, psychosocial, legal and economic support is urgently required. Whatever support we provide, we must ensure that women and girls are at the heart of it. My country is committed to this approach. In Syria, we are providing counselling for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, as well as clinical care, reproductive health care and cash assistance to particularly vulnerable households. In Iraq, our Embassy has established working groups to promote women's rights and combat the effects of sexual violence, and we support activities such as legal assistance and support groups for women. We have given over $1.5 billion in humanitarian support to the Syrian crisis. The United Nations has a particularly important role to play. We strongly support the Secretary-General's recommendation for greater links between the issues of women and peace and security, and fighting extremism. We hope that this will be addressed in the review of resolution 1325 (2000) this year, and I welcome what the Permanent Representative of Spain has just said about the energy and commitment that the Spanish presidency will bring to this issue in October.

Secondly, national military and security actors must be responsive to survivors' needs. More focused training, incorporating gender and survivor awareness, and better information-sharing between military and civilians are part of the solution. However, so is making our police and military more representative of our societies, with greater recruitment and promotion of women. Until that happens, we are not going to make real, substantive and lasting progress on this issue. United Nations peacekeepers and police can also do more to address the needs of women and girls. We need to empower peacekeeping personnel to prevent and respond to sexual violence. That must be central to predeployment preparations at all ranks, and fully integrated into mission-wide objectives and mandates, as the representative of France emphasized earlier. We hope that the peace operations review later this year will reflect these important recommendations.

Thirdly, we must ensure greater accountability for all perpetrators and for Governments that do not uphold their responsibility to protect the vulnerable in society. Our support, whether through improved training or more female personnel, can help encourage victims of sexual violence to come forward and help end the stigma associated with this crime. We must match this with more investigations and more prosecutions, including through the International Criminal Court, to show that there is no impunity. We also encourage States to implement the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict, launched at the Global Summit held in London in 2014. This important tool can help national and international justice and human rights practitioners document sexual violence and pursue accountability for these crimes effectively. The United Kingdom has thus far supported and trained practitioners of the Protocol in areas as diverse as Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nepal and Colombia. We have also raised awareness with international faith leaders, bearing in mind their often unique position of influence with survivors.

Allow me to conclude with this point: if we are to end sexual violence in conflict, we must tackle its root causes as well as its symptoms. We all have a responsibility to end gender inequality and discrimination in our societies, and in the Council we have a unique responsibility to prevent conflicts that allow sexual violence to thrive. Last year, resolution 2171 (2014) affirmed that human rights violations and abuses, including sexual violence, could act as indicators for impending conflict. If we are to uphold international peace and security, the Council must heed and act on these warnings to prevent conflict taking hold. This is difficult work. It is not work that the Council is brilliant at, but it is an area where we can make progress using the tools that we have, and we need to use whatever evidence we have to make progress here. By doing so, we will give women and girls around the world a future that those at Chibok were denied.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): Chile thanks the presidency of Jordan for convening this debate. We welcome the briefings, in particular by Hamsatu Allamin, which drive us to act more decisively to prevent, eradicate and punish conflict-related sexual violence and the stigma attached thereto and ensure reparation and reintegration for survivors. We appreciate the work of the Special Representative, Zainab Hawa Bangura, and her team, and we welcome her seventh annual briefing, which identifies new parties involved in such violence, including non-State and terrorist armed groups. We welcome the commitments made by some parties in support of the system.

Chile strongly condemns conflict-related sexual violence in its various forms, which, depending on the circumstances, might constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, torture or other serious violations of human rights. We note with amazement how sexual violence is used not only as a tactic of war but also by non-State and terrorist armed groups to sow terror, thus threatening international peace and security. No religion or ideology could justify such actions, and we call for cooperation on developing strategies to prevent and eradicate violent extremism that promotes sexual violence.

Despite the progress achieved by resolution 1820 (2008) and related resolutions, we regret to note that we have not yet achieved their full implementation. We therefore support the urgent implementation of the recommendations of the most recent report of the Secretary-General on the subject (S/2015/203).

We urge States and the international community to enhance its work to prevent, punish and eradicate such violence, while fighting against impunity and using to that end national tribunals, international tribunals such as the International Criminal Court, mixed tribunals, truth and reconciliation commissions and community justice mechanisms.

The responses to this scourge must guarantee reintegration and fair and adequate compensation for all victims. The Guidance Note of the Secretary-General on Reparations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence of June 2014 provides guidelines and best practices to consider in this respect. The trust funds established to that end, such as the Multi-Partner Trust Fund and the International Criminal Court's Trust Fund for Victims, can contribute to efforts undertaken in that direction and require sustainable financial support.

In 2014, we focused on prevention; today, we would like to emphasize participation and protection. Protection cannot exist without women's participation, which in turn requires a secure, enabling environment. We must guarantee, even in the most fragile contexts, the participation of women in the prevention and elimination of all forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence. The participation of women should be guaranteed in peacekeeping operations; peace processes; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes; and in mediation, reconstruction and electoral reform efforts and security, justice and administration sector reforms. It is important to provide women with the necessary training to ensure their equal access in all of those areas.

Our experience as a non-permanent member indicates that the Council should make more and better use of available mechanisms in addressing this violence, which affects not only women and girls, but men and boys as well, worldwide. Such violence must be an integral item on the Council's agenda. It should be addressed in its consultations, relevant resolutions and mission mandates, as well as in the terms of reference of the field visits and missions of the Council's subsidiary bodies. We support greater interaction between those bodies, especially the sanctions committees and their respective teams of experts, and the Office of the Special Representative.

The Council should bring greater pressure to bear on the perpetrators of such violence, including the parties named in the reports of the Secretary-General, and consider the adoption of selective, phased measures by the relevant sanctions committees, while ensuring respect for due process. The various missions, including electoral missions, commissions of inquiry and related mechanisms, should consider appointing women protection and gender advisers, and guarantee the protection of civilians in order to focus on combating the scourge with a view to affecting a greater proportion of the internally displaced persons and refugees. The training of peacekeeping contingents should include a gender perspective, including measures to prevent sexual violence and to ensure respect by security forces of the due diligence policy on human rights and accountability in the conduct of cases involving personnel.

We reiterate the importance of promoting, protecting and ensuring access for survivors of sexual violence to timely and non-discriminatory multifaceted assistance, including access to adequate health services to enable their rehabilitation. In that respect, we value the role of civil society, including women's organizations, community and religious leaders, the media and human rights defenders. We support the efforts of the United Nations system to build the capacities of such groups. As one example, we note the Colombian authorities' successful efforts in fighting this scourge. We especially highlight the policies of the peace process in victim support.

Last March, Chile launched its second national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions, which includes, among its strategic objectives, the prevention of violence, especially sexual and gender-based violence, against women and girls.

To conclude, Chile reiterates its decisive commitment to the implementation of resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008) and others. We will continue collaborating to ensure that the Council pays due attention to this agenda item, the development of which will contribute to the global review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In that regard, we firmly support the ministerial meeting to be convened by Spain during its Council presidency in October.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Jordan for its initiative to convene today's open debate. I thank Ms. Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her briefing and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for her statement.

Women are an important force in achieving stability, maintaining peace and promoting development. The protection of women's rights and interests and the promotion of gender equality represent advances in human civilization. However in many armed conflicts, sexual violence against women has been used by the parties as a tactic of war. In particular, in recent years terrorist and extremist forces have committed acts of sexual violence in a number of locations, which has gravely threatened the lives and safety of vulnerable groups, including women and girls, and given rise to serious international concern.

China strongly condemns and firmly objects to the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, including any acts of sexual violence committed against women and girls. We support the efforts of the international community in its work against sexual violence in conflict in the following four aspects.

First, in addressing the root causes of sexual violence in conflict, only the achievement of peace and the promotion of development can ensure the elimination of sexual violence in conflict. The international community must pay close attention to the promotion of the socioeconomic development of relevant countries, the genuine improvement of women's status, and their achievement of full empowerment. As the primary body responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council should fully implement the provisions of Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations and pursue the peaceful settlement of disputes through negotiation, mediation and good offices in order to eliminate the root causes and breeding grounds of sexual violence in conflict.

Secondly, the sovereignty of the countries concerned must be firmly respected, while their leadership role is ensured. The countries concerned bear the primary responsibility for combating sexual violence in conflict and protecting the rights and interests of vulnerable groups, such as women and girls. The international community should support relevant countries in adopting a zero-tolerance policy in the fight against sexual violence in conflict. The international community should firmly abide by the principle of State ownership, State leadership and State responsibility; fully honour the sovereignty and will of the countries concerned; respect Governments' measures taken in accordance with national conditions; provide constructive assistance in the areas of capital, human resources and technology; and avoid the imposition of outside solutions.

Thirdly, it is necessary to integrate policies and create synergies. In view of its responsibilities and advantages, the Council should play a positive role in countering sexual violence in conflict. The Peacebuilding Commission, UN-Women and the World Health Organization should play their respective roles, work with each other in conflict prevention, peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction, and provide medical, legal and psychological services to the victims of sexual violence, as well as a sound political, security and social environment for the protection of women's rights and interests.

Fourthly, counter-terrorism activities must be intensified. Terrorist and extremist forces have committed acts of brutal sexual violence, while expanding the ranks of their victims. The international community should pay close attention to those developments and link the elimination of sexual violence in conflict closely with counter-terrorism initiatives. Acts of terror, whenever, wherever and by whomsoever committed, must be resolutely combated according to a uniform standard. Terrorism should not be linked with a particular nationality or religion. Counter-terrorism activities should be undertaken on the basis of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations; respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of the countries concerned; give full play to the leading role of the United Nations and the Security Council; and provide a peaceful and secure living environment for victims of sexual violence subjected to the threat of terrorism.

This year marks the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security. China wishes to take this opportunity to work with the international community to jointly cultivate a peaceful, secure and stable international environment, effectively ensure the rights and interests of women and girls, and eliminate sexual violence in conflict situations as soon as possible.

Mrs. Adnin (Malaysia): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for having convened this open debate on women and peace and security, focusing on the pressing issue of sexual violence in conflict. My delegation expresses its appreciation to Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her briefing and to Ms. Hamsatu Allamin for her poignant presentation.

Malaysia associates itself with the statement to be delivered by Viet Nam on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

It is a sad truth that situations of conflict have throughout history formed the backdrop for heinous violations of sexual violence against civilians, disproportionately affecting women and girls, as well as men and boys. In this regard, over the past two decades the international normative framework to end and prevent sexual violence in conflict has been fortified, inter alia through seven resolutions adopted by the Council, including resolution 1325 (2000).

And yet the seventh annual report of the Secretary-General on sexual violence in conflict (S/2015/203) provides a shocking reminder that sexual violence continues to be widely committed as a tactic of war, causing devastating consequences for women and girls and shattering local communities caught in the crossfire. The report documents cases of women and girls being sexually assaulted while farming or collecting firewood; abducted from homes and schools en masse to be sold into sexual slavery or forced marriages; or compelled to flee neighbourhoods to escape persecution, only to find themselves at risk of sexual violence in displacement camps.

The physical and personal insecurity faced by women and children in situations of armed conflict permeates daily lives and routines, resulting in intolerable environments and prolonged instability. Clearly we need to redouble our efforts to ensure the effective implementation of all Security Council resolutions in preventing sexual violence and returning peace, security and stability to conflict-stricken areas.

The report also highlights recurring challenges and new trends in conflict-related sexual violence, namely, the rise of violent extremist groups. Malaysia is deeply alarmed at the fact that violent extremist groups are using sexual violence as a means to terrorize, persecute and conquer. We condemn in strongest terms the barbaric acts of sexual violence committed by Al-Qaida, Boko Haram, Daesh and their ilk, particularly against women and girls, which have caused unspeakable anguish to families and local communities.

In parallel with disturbing reports of sexual violence being committed against women, we are also witnessing cases of women and youth, including young girls, being lured into joining such groups. Given the complexity of the spheres of influence surrounding violent extremist groups and their link to terrorism, the international community must ensure that its response is multidimensional and takes into account the fact that women are victims as well as agents of violent extremism. In this regard, we agree that measures to prevent and address sexual violence should be strategically aligned with efforts to prevent violent extremism.

In underlining the primary responsibility of Governments to ensure the protection of civilians and uphold human rights, we firmly support the efforts of national Governments to strengthen measures to eliminate sexual violence in conflict, including through the adoption of action plans in concert with the United Nations. We also commend the initiatives of Governments to protect the rights of victims of sexual violence and improve access to justice through the passage of relevant legislation. The importance of accountability and justice mechanisms cannot be overstated, and we believe that national capacities must be enhanced and supported in this regard.

We note that the majority of parties listed in the annex to the Secretary-General's annual report consist of non-State armed groups and hold the view that peace processes provide a critical forum of engagement with such groups. We call for provisions on sexual violence in conflict to be integrated into all peace processes, negotiations and agreements. In this regard, we recognize the great value of the United Nations Guidance for Mediators: Addressing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence in Ceasefire and Peace Agreements as a tool in training envoys, mediators and mediation experts.

At the same time, the involvement of women in peace processes is crucial, and we commend the efforts of those Member States that have specifically reserved space at the negotiating table for meaningful participation by women, including survivors of sexual violence.

Malaysia believes that peacekeeping missions and peace operations must be adequately supported so as to respond and prevent incidents of sexual violence in conflict. We believe that this can be done through standardized pre-deployment and in-mission training. Mindful of this need, Malaysia's Peacekeeping Training Centre has collaborated, and continues to collaborate, with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and United Nations partners to provide training in various aspects of peacekeeping for countries in Asia and beyond. One current project running from March 2014 to December 2015 involves developing training manuals and modules on, inter alia, gender, cultural diversity in peacekeeping operations and the protection of civilians.

We note with appreciation the complementary roles of women protection advisers and gender advisers in United Nations missions in ensuring the effective implementation of Council resolutions on sexual violence in conflict and on women, peace and security, and we call for these posts to be sufficiently budgeted for.

The stigmatization faced by victims of sexual violence contributes to the persistent underreporting of sexual violence cases and remains a challenge that needs to be overcome. This stigma also affects the children born to victims of sexual violence, who are sometimes abandoned or grow up shunned by society. We call for national Governments and civil-society actors, including religious leaders, to step up efforts to reduce the paralysing stigma experienced by survivors of sexual violence at the community level.

We stress that survivors of sexual violence must receive timely and comprehensive assistance and health-care services to aid their recovery and reintegration into communities. We urge that consistent funding be channelled into reintegration programmes that empower women and girls, especially livelihood programmes and education opportunities. We also support the design and implementation of reparation programmes as a tool for empowerment in line with the recommendations of the Guidance Note of the

Secretary-General on Reparations for Conflict-Related Sexual Violence.

The wounds inflicted by conflict-related sexual violence can scar survivors and communities for generations. The collective and coordinated response of all stakeholders, including Member States, the United Nations and civil society, is crucial to ensuring long-term strategies that will allow scarred communities to heal and rebuild. I wish to conclude by taking this opportunity to particularly commend the tenacious work of Ms. Bangura, as well as the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict and United Nations Action, in catalysing responses in this field. Malaysia pledges its support for all these efforts.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I thank you, Madam President, for organizing this debate. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura and Ms. Allamin for their very lucid briefings.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) presents an operational context for conflict-related sexual violence. Indeed, we want to thank him for placing the United Nations in the vanguard of the global fight against sexual violence.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the Permanent Observer of the African Union on behalf of the African Union.

We want to welcome in particular the efforts of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict to improve inter-agency coordination, knowledge-building, advocacy and technical country-level support. Of particular significance is the publication by United Nations Action in 2014 of a guidance note designed to improve and perfect data collection on sexual violence and reporting to the Security Council. We believe, however, that it is essential to include in our quest for answers broader questions about the prevalence of sexual violence in human society. The image of men fighting and dying in wars while women remain protected at home has become a myth in our times. Contemporary violent extremism in all parts of the world has rendered women and girls exceedingly vulnerable. In today's armed conflict, women living in areas of conflict, who are essentially non-combatants, suffer as much if not more than soldiers in active service.

In order for us to obtain enduring answers on this subject, we must cast our enquiry beyond situations of active conflict into all human situations. As conflicts do not exist in isolation, it is unlikely that we can understand sexual violence outside the larger context of human society. We must seek a full moral and helpful understanding of the correlation between sexual violence in societies on either side of the conflict divide. Preventing sexual violence is a critical element in fighting this scourge, whatever the context. We therefore commend United Nations Action for adapting its framework of early warning indicators of conflict-related sexual violence for use in several countries. We expect this effort to enhance the ability of United Nations mission to prevent sexual violence.

Promoting accountability and fighting impunity are crucial to ending sexual violence. In that regard, Nigeria notes the important work being conducted by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, including criminal investigations and prosecutions, the collection and preservation of evidence, criminal law reform, the protection of victims and reparations. We look forward to the compilation of good practices that the Team is currently preparing.

Nigeria's national policy on gender identifies gender-based violence as a threat to the fundamental human rights of women. The policy recognizes the link between gender inequality and gender-based violence, and aims to address the systematic inequalities by prioritizing the empowerment of women as a crucial first step towards equality. This is being promoted through the introduction of a gender-based perspective in all aspects of policy planning and legislation.

The fight against sexual violence should not be left to Governments alone. Indeed, ending this kind of violence is not a task that Governments alone can accomplish. There is an important role for civil society to play in this enterprise. We recognize the efforts of various national and international non-governmental organizations, and express our full support for them as major stakeholders in combating sexual violence.

Nigeria commends the Government of the United Kingdom for its global leadership in mobilizing countries to act against sexual violence. As a signatory to the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, Nigeria was pleased to participate in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, which was held in London in June 2014. One significant outcome of the Summit was the launch of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in

Conflict. The Protocol outlines global standards for the collection of evidence on sexual violence. The aim is to increase conviction rates for offences and deter future occurrences of sexual violence.

We are pleased to note that the Summit generated substantial political support all across the world. The key task now, and the key challenge for us, is to translate that political support into effective action on the ground. That will require a multi-stakeholder approach involving various actors playing different but complementary roles. The Nigerian Government remains firmly committed to working in a collaborative manner with relevant international and domestic partners to end this scourge.

Yesterday, 14 April, marked the anniversary of the infamous abduction of 276 Nigerian schoolgirls by the terrorist group Boko Haram. The Nigerian Government and people are united in a strong determination to find and free them all, as well as all the other victims of sexual violence perpetrated by that terrorist group. Together with our neighbours Chad and Cameroon, we are placing Boko Haram on the defensive. We are confident that the group will be crushed and its leaders and members held accountable for the war crimes and crimes against humanity that they are committing.

Nigeria takes note of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, and expresses its full support for them. We share the view of the Secretary-General that sexual violence has become a tactic employed by terrorist groups, and that makes it even more dangerous. This is evident in the actions of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, Boko Haram and other extremist groups. We therefore see merit in aligning efforts to address sexual violence with efforts to prevent extremism.

As part of the efforts of the Nigerian Government to counter violent extremism, steps are being taken under a soft approach, which was launched on the premises of the United Nations, encompassing peace, security and development. The main focus of the approach is deradicalization, countering the extremist narrative and advancing economic regeneration. We support the recommendation that Security Council missions should focus attention on issues pertaining to sexual violence and engage with stakeholders on the ground. We stand ready to work with other Council members to give practical effect to these and other recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Jordan.

At the outset, I wish to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, and her team for their outstanding efforts in drafting the report before us today (S/2015/203), and for her comprehensive briefing. I also thank Mr. Hamsatu Allamin of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for her enlightening briefing.

Tangible progress has been made in terms of developing standards and legal frameworks to protect against sexual violence in conflict. The approach adopted by the international community to prevent this barbaric phenomenon has been instrumental. In spite of that progress, however, we continue to see the most abject of crimes being perpetrated during and after conflict, including rape, forced prostitution, sexual slavery and forced sterilization.

The report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) paints a very gloomy picture with respect to the unprecedented increase in the types of violence and the number of victims, in particular in the Middle East and Africa. In fact, some States and State-affiliated groups, as well as non-State armed groups, have adopted innovative measures to systematically use sexual violence as a weapon of war against civilians — to terrorize them and force them into exile or displacement, to humiliate them and undermine the moral authority and standing of the adversary, and to get victims to join their ranks. In that regard, the acts perpetrated by Daesh — including mass kidnappings of women and minors in areas under its control, rape, the sale and presentation of women as gifts, and systematic sexual servitude — require that we give this problem the priority attention it deserves.

Daesh is also using such violence and collective punishment as a way of attracting and winning over young delinquents to their ranks. The same goes for Boko Haram, which carries out mass kidnappings of girls in Nigeria, exploiting them in the worst way by using girls under the age of 10 for suicide attacks. In that regard, we note that there is no specific registry of the number of victims of those crimes perpetrated in conflicts. As members are aware, that is because victims do not submit complaints in order to avoid being stigmatized or held responsible. They also fear reprisals against their local communities. Hence the importance of awareness-raising in communities to change those mistaken perceptions, which are prevalent in some conflict areas. We need to empower victims and ensure the necessary protection. We need to create an environment conducive to their return to normal lives.

Among the major challenges currently facing the international community, there is the need to ensure accountability with respect to the perpetrators of these crimes. We need to ensure that there is no impunity. In that regard, we reiterate the need for States to cooperate by observing the obligation to extradite or prosecute perpetrators. Legal mechanisms to combat these crimes exist under international treaties and conventions. However, legal gaps remain that we must work to fill, as they impede the prosecution of perpetrators. In that regard, we also need to help countries and empower their legal institutions in order to address these issues. We also call on the Security Council to work with the International Criminal Court in prosecuting perpetrators by pressuring States that are unable or unwilling to act to prosecute or extradite perpetrators to third parties for prosecution. We reiterate the importance for the Security Council to also encourage documentation and follow-up on these crimes.

We need to encourage States engulfed in violence or armed conflict to develop plans of action to combat sexual violence, as well as to grant the relevant United Nations agencies access to conflict zones in order to provide the necessary support to victims. We pay tribute to the efforts of the Organization in launching an initiative to improve the performance of United Nations missions with regard to issues of sexual violence.

Within our modest means, we in Jordan are working actively to ensure the greatest possible protection and care for victims of these types of crimes with respect to Syrian refugees. It goes without saying that we condemn all attempts by individuals to exploit refugees, especially women and girls, by exposing them to the dangers of such crimes owing to the circumstances they are living in. Jordan is raising awareness among individual refugees upon their entry into Jordan, providing them with pamphlets on their human rights and ensuring that they are not exploited. We have also set aside spaces for refugees in public and private schools, based on our belief in education as the front line of defence against this type of crime.

Some of the steps taken by Jordan to reduce the incidence of this phenomenon in armed conflict include the holding of training sessions on investigating sexual violence in conflict, as well as sessions on legal aspects and for police officers and military commanders. We are also keen to promote the role of women in the military in order to heighten the effectiveness of humanitarian missions and peacekeeping operations. We are also increasing the role of women in the Kingdom's medical services by ensuring that they are present in clinics and field hospitals. Jordanian women have had a key role to play in caring for and protecting Syrian refugees. This will contribute to their involvement in peacekeeping operations.

We call for speeding up the appointment of a special adviser on the protection of women. We also call for a gender-specific approach in United Nations missions.

In conclusion, we have a long road ahead in the efforts pursued by Member States and United Nations bodies in order to ensure the necessary protection against sexual violence in conflict and ultimately eradicate it. In that regard, I want to recall that victims are possibly among the people we know. As such, we should continue to support any and every effort in order to prevent and eradicate this heinous phenomenon and bring about a better future for coming generations.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alexander De Croo, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Development Cooperation, Digital Agenda, Telecom and Postal Services of Belgium.

Mr. De Croo (Belgium): I wish to thank the briefers in today's debate, namely, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangoura and Ms. Allamin of Nigeria, who spoke on behalf of civil society.

I am honoured to speak here today about a subject of the utmost importance for my country, Belgium. I align myself with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the European Union.

A few weeks ago, I was shocked by the testimony of a young Yazidi girl who had been held captive by Daesh in the north of Syria. The girl explained how she had been abused several times a day, and how several other girls killed themselves in despair of their hopeless situation. That is one more cruel illustration of how sexual violence is not only used as a weapon of war, but also constitutes a tactic of terror. Therefore, as rightly suggested by the recommendations of the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203), efforts to prevent and address sexual violence must also closely be aligned with efforts to prevent violent extremism.

Just last month, I visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In Goma I was approached by survivors of sexual violence. Women testified about how they had been raped by soldiers, by rebels and even by camp guards when they dared to leave the camp to look for the charcoal they needed to cook and to survive. These women were desperate. They asked us for safety and shelter. We have to respond. That is why I am here today.

According to Dr. Mukwege, who for many years has been caring for survivors of sexual violence at the Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, South Kivu, a recent development is the rise of sexual violence perpetrated by civilians. One explanation for this development is that, through disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, former child soldiers have indeed been reintegrated, but owing to insufficient vetting and psychological follow-up, they perpetuate a culture of violence, including sexual violence, within their communities. That leads to the continuation of structural gender-based violence, with a multiplicity of consequences, not only for the individual but also for the community and the society as a whole.

In that regard, Belgium welcomes the decision by the Congolese authorities to prosecute high-ranking Congolese army officers suspected of crimes of sexual violence and to offer reparations to a number of survivors. The appointment of a personal representative of the President on sexual violence and child recruitment, Ms. Mabunda, is an important sign of hope. I look forward to her statement later this morning. The action plan against sexual violence for the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo (FARDC) and the creation of a monitoring committee for the FARDC are indeed very important steps.

Belgium will support United Nations action to fight impunity in Mali, where a comprehensive national strategy to combat sexual and gender-based violence will be drafted. There too, the improvement of the rule of law and of justice mechanisms will be key.

We will also need more efforts for prevention and the participation of women. Women must be part of the solution. We welcome the Algiers peace process for Mali, but we believe that an opportunity may have been missed in terms of including women in the negotiations and giving them a role in the implementation of a future final agreement. Fifteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), the Council must be vigilant that women and women's organizations are fully integrated into such peace negotiations.

On behalf of my country, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Bangura for her work, dedication and the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General she presented. I hope the Council will take into account the recommendations set out in the report. The issue of conflict-related sexual violence must be fully integrated into the work of the relevant Security Council sanctions committees as part of the designation criteria for the imposition of targeted measures.

Belgium welcomes the ongoing work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which focuses its efforts on strengthening the capacity of national rule of law and justice actors. We encourage countries to draw upon their expertise to strengthen their capacity to address impunity for conflict-related sexual violence.

In conclusion, I wish to encourage the Security Council to keep the fight against conflict-related sexual violence high on its agenda and to take action accordingly. Sexual violence as a weapon of war, often used against the most vulnerable, remains a stain on the conscience of the international community. If we want to uphold our common humanity, it is our duty to end all forms of conflict-related sexual violence.

The President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Lynne Yelich, Minister of State of Canada.

Ms. Yelich (Canada): Canada, along with all States represented here today, is deeply concerned by the still growing trend of sexual violence and abuse targeting women and girls in conflict situations. We are alarmed by the recent report (A/HRC/28/18) by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which points to possible war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, including rape and sexual slavery directed against civilian populations in Syria and Iraq. The reports of thousands of young Yazidi girls bought and sold in slave markets is nothing short of disturbing.

Unfortunately, these heinous crimes extend far beyond the tragic conflict in Iraq and Syria. Just yesterday, we marked the one-year anniversary of the terrible kidnapping of hundreds of young girls from their school in northern Nigeria. One year later, the fate of most of those innocent girls is still unknown. In addition, the sustained and widespread acts of sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo remains an ongoing crisis.

The sobering fact is that violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent human rights violations in the world today, and we know that the consequences are only amplified in situations of conflict.

Canada is proud to contribute to global efforts to stop the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. Canada's contribution includes vital support for survivors of sexual violence, including through local partners, and the documentation of crimes and abuses so that we can hold perpetrators to account.

Canadians have reaffirmed their concern over the continuing atrocities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our Parliament debated the ongoing crisis, and Canada's efforts to address sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have been producing results. Since 2006, over 60,000 survivors have accessed health and psychological support, over 15,000 survivors have acquired new job skills and over 800 perpetrators have been convicted. While this shows progress, much remains to be done. We must do more, not only in ISIL-affected areas and in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but also in areas affected by Boko Haram, as well as in the many other countries listed by the Secretary-General in his excellent report (S/2015/203) on sexual violence.

Canada is very grateful for the work of Ms. Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. Her efforts give voice to the too many voiceless women and girls that become survivors of these cowardly and despicable acts.

We must do more to support more survivors and ensure that they can live in dignity and security within their families and participate fully in the economic and social lives of their communities and countries. We must ensure that the world investigates and documents these crimes and human rights abuses, and hold those responsible to account. We must ensure that those in leadership who order, permit or condone widespread and systematic sexual violence are tried and prosecuted. Canada supports the important work of Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women in deploying trained experts to do this work. We must do more to ensure areas that are meant to be a safe haven or a refuge are spaces free from further sexual violence against women and girls and abusive practices, such as child, early and forced marriage. We must do more to ensure that security forces are equipped to protect and investigate these crimes and are not the perpetrators.

Much remains to be done to change the structural causes of sexual violence in conflict, such as discrimination and the denial of human rights. Much remains to be done to change legal and social barriers that prevent women from fully contributing to the political and economic lives of their communities. Women's leadership and participation are essential tools to address sexual violence in conflict. That is why I am pleased to be here today to announce an additional Canadian commitment of $5.4 million as a step towards achieving these goals.

The year 2015 is a year of opportunity to advance efforts to end sexual violence in conflict. That includes the United Nations reviews on women and peace and security, and on peace operations. It also includes work at the Human Rights Council in June to consider draft resolutions on violence against women and on child, early and forced marriage. Those are all opportunities to underline the importance of respect for human rights and the empowerment of women and girls.

The consequences of this violence are not only felt by those victimized. The violence affects entire communities and undermines a country's ability to prosper. These women and girls must be empowered to move their communities beyond these tragedies and ensure that they are fully engaged in all aspects of their security, economic, social and political development.

The International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December will consider a draft resolution on sexual violence in conflict, with some 170 countries participating. That will be an opportunity for countries and national societies to pledge actions to end sexual violence.

Canada remains committed to working at the United Nations, in other international forums and in countries of concern to See this work completed. Women and girls deserve to live in safety and dignity — especially in conflict situations, when their contributions to community peace and resilience are so badly needed. We must redouble our efforts.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mrs. Dakhil (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the delegation of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We wish them every success in their task. I would also like to thank the Government of my country for providing me with the opportunity to participate in this debate. I express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his annual report on sexual violence during armed conflicts for the period of January to December 2014 (S/2015/203). Moroever, I wish to commend the important part played by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the outstanding role that office plays in that context.

I would like to make several remarks in the context of the Secretary-General's report.

First, we fully concur with paragraph 28 of the report, as the year 2014 was one of the bloodiest years in Iraq since 2003, particularly the second half of that year, when the entire Iraqi population began to suffer from the brutal attacks launched by the enemies of humankind and civilization — namely, the terrorists of the criminal group Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). That included every manner of attack on the lives, security and dignity of Iraqi citizens from every social sphere, as well as threats to the very existence of Iraqi society and its safety, security, stability and the peaceful coexistence of its components. Along with the numerous other criminal and savage acts committed by ISIL against innocent Iraqis, which in terms of their criminality and violence deserve to be considered crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide based on prevailing legal norms, sexual violence was one of the central components used by ISIL. The facts indicate that violence and sexual attacks form a significant part of ISIL's criminal doctrine, which includes all forms of sexual violence, including kidnapping, rape, sexual slavery, genital mutilation and trafficking in persons for sexual purposes, as well as forced marriage, forced pregnancy and forced abortion.

Today, ISIL's barbarity defies understanding. Its practices and criminality have exposed the group's intent to take humankind back to ancient times, when human dignity was regularly trampled upon and humans were bought and sold like merchandise in the market. The criminals of ISIL have established markets for the sale of women and children and have set prices for the women who are ISIL's victims, and especially members of the Yazidi sect, in blatant contravention of all norms and dictates of both divine and worldly laws.

The Iraqi Government has taken a number of steps and adopted a number of resolutions. To the best of its abilities, the Iraqi Parliament has issued a number of laws to promote and improve the situation of Iraqi women and guarantee their enjoyment of all their civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. The Iraqi Government was among the first to respond to the requirements of resolution 1325 (2000), concerning the promotion and protection of women. We have adopted a national action plan to implement that resolution and have launched two national strategies in that regard, the first for the promotion of women and the second for combating violence against women and for taking the necessary steps in that regard. That makes Iraq the first State in the Middle East to begin implementing the resolution. Despite all the suffering that Iraq has endured at the hands of terrorists, Iraq today is continuing to implement the national action plan for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). That is in addition to a number of special measures to respond to the new, urgent needs resulting from ISIL's attacks, particularly against women. The Iraqi Government has sought, to the best of its abilities, to provide a rapid response in order to offer relief and assistance to the survivors. The regional Government of Kurdistan has also formed a special committee focused on genocide that seeks to receive and assist female survivors. Both Governments are also assisting internally displaced persons and providing them with humanitarian assistance.

Based on the foregoing, I would like to seize the two opportunities presented to me — that of my presence here and the fact that today is the Yazidi New Year, an occasion we cannot truly celebrate when such a large number of Yazidi women have taken hostage and kidnapped. Still, I seize this opportunity to call on the international community once gain, as Member States and as international organizations, to continue to assist the Iraqi Government win its fight against terrorism in order to achieve the liberation of the areas controlled now by that criminal group and to hold accountable its members as well as those who have provided it with support. I call on the international community to assist with the rehabilitation of the victims of terrorism, particularly the victims of sexual violence, especially women, and to rehabilitate them psychologically, providing them with the necessary skills to guarantee their return to their central role in Iraqi society and to help the country prosper.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Ms. Mabunda Lioko (Democratic Republic of the Congo) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour for me to take part in this debate on behalf of my country. I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, for convening this meeting under your presidency. While encouraging Ms. Allamin, who spoke at the outset of the meeting, I would also like to thank Special Representative Bangura for her commitment to the cause of women and her particular efforts on behalf of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

For 10 years before the return to peace in 2013, the Democratic Republic of the Congo faced deadly armed conflicts in the east, where rape was used as a weapon of war against women. Despite that troubled decade, my country has worked to make progress in the fight against sexual violence, as can be seen from the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/203) today. Indeed, there were 10,882 cases of sexual violence reported in 2014 as compared to 15,323 in 2013, or a reduction of 33 per cent within a year. The cases of rape attributable to the armed forces were reduced from 71 per cent in 2013 to 42 per cent in 2014, or a reduction of almost 50 per cent. That was no accident; it is a reflection of our nation's commitment.

Since my appointment in July 2014, the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has remained on the alert, notably through an acceleration in the work of the justice system and the fight against impunity, with 135 rape indictments against members of the military, in particular and for the first time, an indictment against a general of the Congolese Army; the appointment of three female generals, one of whom is the head of the army training school; the adoption of a plan reviewed by the United Nations to fight sexual violence; and a declaration by more than 20 brigade commanders of our army who have pledged to follow that plan; the establishment of an emergency call centre aimed at helping victims to get immediate assistance; prevention through a massive poster campaign entitled "Break the Silence"; and the publication soon, with the assistance of the International Criminal Court, of a collection of the sentences in the cases mentioned above. Finally, we instituted an aggressive policy of promoting access to education for young girls by the construction of 1,000 schools per year, the allocation of a $100 million budget, and an increase in the share of the national budget devoted to education from 6 per cent to 16 per cent over the past 4 years, with the resulting free enrolment of 17 million Congolese children in primary school, as opposed to 7 million in 2001, which has also led to a modest improvement in the parity index.

Those improvements were due, to start with, to the determination, will and substantial support demonstrated by the Congolese Government, coupled with the support of the international community. I have mentioned the United Nations, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Bangura; Japan; the United Nations Population Fund; and UNICEF. We are proud of being able to sustain that effort but are certainly far from feeling satisfied. Indeed, there remain enormous challenges before us, but today, we, Congolese women and girls, having paid a heavy price, have taken the decision to leave victimhood behind, choosing the path of resilience in order to take our destiny into our own hands as women, no longer on our knees despite having been raped, but rather standing to deal with those challenges, hoping for a return to sustainable peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

There are no miracles. Those results were not isolated and were not attained without the real passion of the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, accompanied by the Government of Prime Minister Matata Ponyo Mapon, through consistent and courageous policies put in place for the long term, geared towards development, not just emergency measures. In 2014, our growth rate was 9.5 per cent and the inflation rate was 1.03 per cent, which indicates that perhaps we can now place our hope in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): My delegation would like to thank you, Madam President, for having organized this debate. We have read the concept note (S/2015/243, annex) circulated by your delegation and reviewed the progress made in the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions on the subject before us. We would also like to thank our briefers this morning.

Going by what we have just heard from the delegations of Iraq and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we are in strong agreement with the view that sexual violence in armed conflict is not incidental, but is integrally linked with the strategic objectives, ideology and funding of extremist groups. That is equally worrisome when the list of perpetrators of armed conflict mentioned in the Secretary General's report (S/2015/203) has increased to include 45 parties that commit egregious and heinous crimes, including sexual violence against women, girls, men and boys, and use sexual violence as a tactic of terror.

We also take note of the fact that the list of perpetrators of sexual violence in armed conflict includes mainly non-State actors who act beyond the pale of law. That strengthens our view that we should extend more support to national Governments in their efforts to deal with such challenges. Those efforts include ownership and capacity-building aimed at adopting progressive legal frameworks and legislation to implement zero tolerance for sexual violence. National Governments should be encouraged to realize their primary responsibility for leadership and response in dealing with sexual violence through social-sector reforms and the establishment of rule-of-law-based systems. The reintegration of the survivors of sexual violence needs to be facilitated by providing a safe, secure and enabling environment, free from fear of stigmatization and reprisals. Recourse by the Council to international punitive mechanisms should be considered only as a matter of last resort.

The impact of armed conflict on women and girls and the role of women in peace operations remain central issues in conflict situations, as outlined in the landmark resolution 1325 (2000). The mainstreaming of a gender perspective in peace operations is a prerequisite for achieving the ultimate goal of gender equality, women's empowerment, sustainable development and sustainable peace and security. We concur with the Secretary-General's report, which calls on us to take cognizance of, and reinforce the need for, the deployment of more women peacekeepers, women protection advisers and gender advisers in peace operations. We support the development of a gender-resource package and training materials. More women in high decision-making positions in multidimensional peace operations is undoubtedly essential.

For our part, India is proud to be committed to assisting the United Nations in the maintenance of international peace and security with nearly 180,000 troops having served under the blue flag so far, the largest contribution by any Member State. That includes the fully formed Indian female police unit in the United Nations Mission in Liberia, which has been commended both by the Government of Liberia and by world leaders. Our women peacekeepers have helped to reduce conflict and confrontation by imparting a greater sense of security to local populations and inspiring women and girls to push for their own rights and participation in the peace process. We continue to lay emphasis on gender-sensitive predeployment training, and we are willing to increase our contribution to peace operations.

We would like to reiterate our principled position that Security Council reports should focus on issues related to the mandate specifically given by the Council. We would urge caution in going beyond those mandates in reports submitted to the Council and to not stray into sweeping generalizations about "other settings of concern", including counter-terrorism, with regard to sexual violence being perpetrated in the context of an increase in violent extremism. It is useful to remind ourselves here that the women-and-peace-and-security agenda evolved from the imperative to address the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women, including the abhorrent practice of sexual violence against women as an instrument of war.

The international community should address that emergent and worrisome challenge in a spirit of compassion, solidarity and burden-sharing. I would like to reaffirm my country's commitment to our collective efforts to find durable solutions to the issues of women and peace and security, within the overall framework of international peace, security and stability. We look forward to the global review on sexual violence to take place in October on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000) and the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Mr. Plasai (Thailand): At the outset, my delegation would like to congratulate the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan for assuming the presidency of the Council for the month of April. I welcome this opportunity to discuss the important issue of sexual violence in conflict, an issue that deserves close attention on the part of the Security Council and the entire international community. We also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203), and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the representative of the Non-governmental Organizations Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their informative briefings.

Thailand aligns itself with the statement of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to be delivered by the Permanent Representative of Viet Nam later in this meeting.

The significant increase of systematic sexual violence in conflict settings, particularly that perpetrated by non-State actors and extremist groups in many areas, as stated in the Secretary-General in his report, is alarming. It requires an immediate response from the international community. To address the issue, a holistic approach must be adopted that encompasses political, social, economic and legal aspects. On the political front in particular, we must work together to strengthen the role of national Governments in ensuring security and the rule of law so as to prevent and protect their people from all forms of sexual violence. National policy in that regard must combine effective preventive measures with robust enforcement action in order to end the impunity of the perpetrators of sexual violence. On the international level, the same must be ensured in action plans to combat terrorism and extremism and in any ceasefire or peace agreements. Monitoring mechanisms must also be put in place.

At the same time, the role of women peacekeepers and female humanitarian staff of the ground must be enhanced. Through our own experience in international peacekeeping, we have learned that the presence of female personnel can significantly help create a safer environment for women and children. Against that backdrop, we have been making consistent efforts to increase our number of female peacekeepers and to provide specific training on gender sensitivity to our peacekeeping personnel before deployment. We also support the efforts of the United Nations to appoint more gender advisers and to integrate a gender perspective into the implementation of peacekeeping mandates at the policy and operational levels alike.

(*spoke in French*)

Another aspect of the issue deserving our particular attention is the provision of assistance to survivors of sexual violence — be they men, women, boys or girls. These people need multidimensional support, including immediate medical assistance and psychological care, as well as access to justice and reparations. Above all, they need social and economic assistance to rebuild their strength, resilience and dignity.

It must also be underscored that survivors of sexual violence in conflict are not mere victims; they can become effective agents of change. It is therefore our shared responsibility to protect them, to help them and to build their capacity to take control of their lives. In that regard, I welcome in particular the important role played by non-governmental organizations, civil society and women's organizations, which work tirelessly to assist those in distress following sexual assault and to prevent sexual violence in conflict.

In conclusion, allow me to underscore that international law, in particular international humanitarian law and human rights legal norms, must be respected. The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and terrorism constitutes a war crime and a crime against humanity. Those who perpetrate such crimes must face justice.

I take this opportunity to assure the international community of the determined commitment of the Kingdom of Thailand to contribute actively to efforts seeking to bring all forms of sexual violence to an end.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Thomas Mays-Harting, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Mayr-Harting: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her briefing today and for the very important work she is doing. I would also like to express my appreciation for the briefing by Ms. Hamsatu Allamin on behalf of civil society.

We welcome the report submitted by the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) and note the updates to the annex of the report. In that regard, we commend the work of Ms. Bangura and of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence, as well as of the UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. We emphasize the importance of the focused recommendations made by the Secretary-General for the thematic and country-specific considerations of the Council.

Twenty years ago, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action drew attention to the widespread and unpunished use of sexual violence in conflict, including the use of systematic rape as a tactic of war and terrorism. It stated that the violations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict were violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights law and humanitarian law. This principle was reaffirmed in the Group of Eight Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The seventh report submitted to the Security Council regrettably reflects the continuing concerning scope of sexual violence, including recent alarming trends, and its close linkages to ensuring broader peace and security. We therefore underline the need to make full use of the mechanisms and tools created by the Security Council to combat and prevent conflict-related sexual violence.

Conflict-related sexual violence is intrinsically linked to broader, multiple and systematic gender-based discrimination. It is facilitated by the absence of women from formal or informal decision-making and of the recognition of their full and equal human rights. It leads to further forms of gender discrimination and abuse, often as a result of steps taken to cope with sexual violence or the threat thereof. Discrimination against women and girls also restricts the access of survivors to assistance and services and can lead to revictimization. The implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Beijing Platform are essential elements in addressing conflict-related sexual violence.

Women need to meaningfully participate in decisions and policymaking with regard to peace and security, in line with the main objectives of resolution 1325 (2000), including to address the underlying causes for sexual violence in conflict and ensure adequate protection measures.

The continued collection of timely information and of training remain crucial to efforts to combat sexual violence, including the detection of early-warning signs. We welcome the contribution of women protection advisers to the implementation of the monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements, and continue to support their further deployment, alongside gender advisers, in United Nations missions. Equally, we need measures to ensure the safety of those who face reprisals and intimidation because of their work to help the survivors of sexual violence or report on such crimes.

We need to end impunity for sexual violence-related crimes. We emphasize the significant advancement in international law made by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as well as non-permanent international criminal tribunals in combating sexual violence in conflict. We underline the need for rapid and effective investigation and documentation of these crimes, and welcome the increased use of the Justice Rapid Response-UN Women special Justice Experts Roster.

The Secretary-General describes the alarming trend of the use of sexual violence by violent extremist groups, including for religious or ethnic persecution, and its integral linkage to their strategic objectives and ideology, including its use to advance recruitment, funding, intelligence gathering, conversion, and the destruction or change of community ties. The empowerment of women and girls and respect for their human rights need to be a part of efforts to counter violent extremism.

Let me just say a few words on European Union actions in that regard. The European Union continues to implement its dedicated policy on women and peace and security, including through close cooperation with other international and regional organizations. Let me also point out that 17 of our 28 member States have adopted national action plans on resolution 1325 (2000).

The European Union continues to follow up the 2014 Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Call to Action on Protecting Girls and Women in Emergencies. At the end of last year, the European Union adopted a guide to practical actions at the EU level for ending sexual violence in conflict, which includes 36 concrete initiatives, ranging from human rights to conflict prevention and humanitarian aid.

We continue to support initiatives to implement resolution 1325 (2000) around the world. Those efforts include support to the programme for women's empowerment included in the Trust Fund for the Central African Republic and aimed at empowering women victims of violence, including through the provision of health services and support to access justice. We are also launching a project in the Democratic Republic of Congo on improving the provision of care to victims of sexual violence and continue to support the work of the Panzi hospital there, headed by Dr. Denis Mukwege, who was awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament in 2014.

The EU continues to support the capacity of civil society and women's organizations as key partners in the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The EU has so far committed over €34 million to protect victims of the Syrian crisis, including for gender-based violence and child-protection activities. We welcomed the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty, which has been signed by all and ratified by almost all member States of the EU.

In conclusion, we are looking forward and contributing to this year's high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), including the global study. As the preparations for the review will be conducted in parallel with the peacebuilding review and the review of peace operations, we have an opportunity to incorporate a strengthened gender dimension into the United Nations peace and security architecture.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Liechtenstein.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): At the outset, allow me to warmly thank the briefers for their very important contributions this morning.

The scourge of conflict-related sexual violence continues unabated. Non-State armed actors and extremist groups have been primarily responsible for these egregious crimes, which are often used as a tactic to terrorize civilian populations and as a method of warfare. While women and girls are the primary targets of this type of violence, men and boys are also affected. The women, peace and security agenda should guide our actions in response. As we deal with multifaceted challenges such as those posed by groups like Daesh, the international community should attach high priority to fighting sexual violence. One meaningful step the Council could take would be to consistently use conflict-related sexual violence as a criterion for the imposition of targeted sanctions. Member States can also play an important role by holding terrorist fighters to account for the crimes they committed abroad, especially when those crimes involve sexual violence.

The surge in conflict-related sexual violence is also a direct challenge to the authority of international humanitarian law. Liechtenstein strongly supports efforts to enhance compliance with international humanitarian law, in particular through improved monitoring. In that regard, we have high hopes for the joint initiative of Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which is aimed at strengthening compliance mechanisms. That should also include greater efforts to ensure effective accountability at the national level, as required under the Geneva Conventions. We were pleased to hear this morning that there has been some progress in that regard, as reported by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General.

National ownership and leadership are key to successfully tackling the challenge posed by conflict-related sexual violence. I would like to commend Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for their efforts. During the past few years, they have had a significant impact in improving the knowledge and capacity of key players in the fields of security, justice and conflict resolution, both domestically and within United Nations field missions. It is crucial to address this issue through a comprehensive effort and to hear the voices of all concerned, including women and survivors.

Fighting impunity is an essential component of our response to conflict-related sexual violence. While the primary responsibility in this regard lies with States, the Security Council and the International Criminal Court (ICC) can play important complementary roles. Nearly every case currently before the Court addresses sexual violence. The ICC Prosecutor pursues sexual and gender-based crimes as a matter of priority. In addition to providing justice to the victims of sexual violence, ICC investigations and prosecutions can also deter the commission of future crimes, as has been confirmed by recent research.

But, of course, the ICC's impact is limited to situations within its jurisdiction. It is the Security Council's responsibility to ensure that appropriate situations involving sexual violence are referred to the Court. The Council's role does not end with the referral, however. As States parties to the Rome Statute have stressed time and again, consistent follow-up to ICC referrals is essential to their success, and the Council's track record in this respect is mixed at best. We therefore call on the Council to match its stated commitment to the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence with appropriate action. Such action needs to take place at all levels, but it needs to include action to ensure State cooperation with ICC investigations requested by the Council.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I wish to thank the Kingdom of Jordan for organizing this open debate, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, for introducing the Secretary-General's thorough report (S/2015/203), which documents the situation on the ground and the current state of one of the most heinous aspects of war: conflict-related sexual violence.

Italy aligns itself with the statement delivered by observer of the European Union; however, I would like to make the following remarks in my national capacity.

Today, no country denies the fact that conflict-related sexual violence is a crime against humanity, as opposed to an inevitable spoil of war, as was maybe the perception until quite recently. Remarkable progress has been made in that respect. We have many Security Council resolutions, beginning with resolution 1325 (2000), which is at the core of the women, peace and security agenda. This debate is a further step towards its implementation. We need to keep the international community focused on this issue and urge greater engagement and action.

As the report of the Secretary-General shows, all forms of sexual violence, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations or in fragile contexts, exacerbate instability and jeopardize the restoration of peace and security, the rule of law and respect for human rights. Conflict-related sexual violence causes physical and psychological damage and has a tremendous socioeconomic impact on affected societies. This is why we believe it is critical to address its root causes, and to explore alarming new trends such as the rise of violent extremism and the increasing use of sexual violence as a tactic not only of war, but also of terror. At the same time, we must continue to strive to strengthen the participation, representation and leadership of women. We advocate, in particular, a stronger Security Council focus on four main areas.

The first area is prevention. As past experience has shown, a focus on healing and reparation will never be a winning strategy. We have to invest in prevention because prevention is the solution. Italy is deeply committed to early warning initiatives, including the framework of analysis, that sound the alarm when there is the risk that a situation will degenerate. We strongly encourage all willing Member States to make a more decisive shift to the prevention mode.

The second area is participation. We believe that all actions to increase the role of women in peacebuilding and peacekeeping depend on empowerment. Participation means increasing the number of women in political bodies, entities and processes. But it also means empowering women and girls to seize opportunities themselves, in order to have a greater impact on conflict prevention and post-conflict governance. We need to give them the means to build their self-confidence and potentialities so as to become the drivers of their sustainable advancement.

The third area concerns the rehabilitation of survivors. To address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls in relief, transitional justice and economic recovery, we need to better complement our efforts with development cooperation and emergency aid activities. Multisectoral, integrated, coordinated and synergistic approaches are to be enhanced.

The fourth area is accountability. We must not underestimate the preventive power of justice. The necessary social changes also require a more effective fight against impunity at all levels, including increased referrals, when appropriate, to the International Criminal Court.

In conclusion, that is how we interpret the four recommendations of the Secretary-General's report, which we fully agree with. They highlight the need to address the root causes of sexual violence in conflict by promoting women's empowerment and gender equality, transforming harmful social norms and countering the rise of extremism, safeguarding the rights and protection needs of survivors through the delivery of multi-sectoral assistance and reintegration measures, and systematically addressing all the elements of resolution 1325 (2000) in the work of the Security Council.

The international community should provide critical support by scaling up integrated actions, increasing its backing for United Nations action and cooperating with all stakeholders, including those from the private sector. It is time to enhance synergies in an integrated approach in order to better the lives of millions of women and men, girls and boys, around the world.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Thoms (Germany): I would like to thank Jordan for organizing today's open debate. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for her insightful briefing on the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (S/2015/203), and to express my appreciation to Ms. Hamsatu Allamin, who spoke so knowledgeably about the situation in Nigeria. It is important to hear the voice of civil society in the Council.

Germany aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union.

In recent months, we have heard about women and girls being abducted, sold as slaves, forced into marriage and sexually abused. What is frequently ignored, however, is that sexual violence is committed against men and boys as well as women and girls. I would like make three points of particular concern to Germany.

First, we welcome the report's detailed analysis of the emerging phenomenon of violent extremism. It reveals that sexual violence is not only a widespread crime committed by individuals but that it functions as an inherent strategic component of extremist groups' ideology. Sexual violence and abuse are used to terrorize local populations into submission, forcibly displace unwanted populations and, even more shockingly, to recruit new fighters, who are promised the sexual availability of women and girls. With that analysis before us, it is high time to tackle the issue. Robust military and police responses and sanctions can be a part of the solution, but such measures should go hand in hand with work at the grass-roots level, where we must strengthen tolerance, the rule of law, the protection of human rights and compliance with international humanitarian law.

Secondly, we welcome the fact that seven of the State parties listed in the annex to the Secretary-General's report have committed to taking joint action with the United Nations to tackle the issue of sexual violence committed by their troops. However, this year's report also shows that more and more non-State armed groups are responsible for systematic and widespread sexual crimes in conflict. The international community must find new and innovative ways to interact with those actors in order to stop them committing such horrific crimes. The International Criminal Court in particular has a leading role to play in that regard, and we welcome its June 2014 policy paper on sexual and gender-based crimes.

We need to focus on the women and girls who fall victim to such violence. Survivors have to be able to access counselling and medical assistance, including a full range of sexual and reproductive health services. They must be encouraged to report such crimes to the responsible authorities, and any re-victimization and stigmatization must be prevented. Finally, they have to be accepted and reintegrated into their communities. Traditional and religious leaders can play a key role in creating a welcoming environment and countering any kind of stigmatization of survivors. We have always emphasized the crucial role of women as active agents in the prevention, management and settlement of conflicts, as well as in reconciliation. Experience has shown that when women have a seat at the table and their voices are heard, the prospects for a lasting peace are better.

Only when we know what is happening on the ground — and this is my third point — can we effectively respond to and help those affected by violence. Women protection advisers have proved to be an essential asset, a fact that is clear from this year's report. Such advisers should be included in the mandates of all the relevant peacekeeping and special political missions, and their funding and deployment should be a priority. Moreover, the situation and role of women in armed conflict should be included in all briefings and reports on country situations.

In October we will celebrate the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000). Together we will utilize the opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved over the past 15 years. We look forward to the results of the global study commissioned by the Council, which will undoubtedly give us concrete guidance on further implementation of the resolution and its follow-up resolutions.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Colombia.

Ms. Mejía Vélez (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you and your country, Madam President, for bringing us together in this open debate. As many have said before me, it could not have been held on a more significant date than the anniversary of Boko Haram's abduction of girls, and I would like to express our solidarity with the people of Nigeria at this difficult time. I would also like to thank Ms. Zainab Bangura for the enormous effort she has put into her work on this issue, and to Ms. Hamsatu Allamin for her words this morning. Colombia is also grateful to Spain, Chile and the United Kingdom for their recognition of my Government's commitment to acting to address this serious problem.

Although it has been under very different circumstances, my country, too, has been affected by this phenomenon, the result of an internal conflict that has afflicted us for more than half a century, despite the fact that we are on the way to reaching a negotiated solution. As Ms. Bangura saw at first hand on her visit to Colombia, we are still facing enormous challenges, but in that raw and painful confrontation we have learned lessons and taken preventive measures that have been described as pioneering at the international level. The challenge lies in effective implementation, and with that commitment, we have developed initiatives on zero tolerance and prevention, and on the care and protection of women who are victims of sexual violence, based on collectively formulated policies that elicit best practices and lessons learned that we can now share with other States dealing with similar challenges.

I would like to point out that Colombia's strategy is founded on two key areas — first, legislatively, through two laws, the first of which, enacted in 2008, provides standards for raising awareness of, preventing and punishing every form of violence and discrimination against women, while the second, enacted last year, incorporates international standards into the area of conflict-related sexual violence. The second area is our endorsement of the State's commitment to victims, supporting them so that from the judicial point of view they cannot be subject to re-victimization or fear impunity for the perpetrators. As Ms. Bangura said eloquently in her press conference yesterday, the survivors of these violent acts want to be heard. They are ready to stand up and get on with their lives, and the Colombian Government will be there to support them.

In the past few years, my country has developed and implemented actions that have had an immediate impact on the protection and promotion of the rights of women, of which I will mention just a few — a monitoring mechanism through a national violence observatory for monitoring various types of sexual violence; an information system that enables us to identify potentially vulnerable populations; an early-warning monitoring system for detecting possible cases and a single registry of victims that enables us to identify men, boys and members of minority groups, as well as women and girls, who have also been victims of such crimes.

We support Spain's proposal to play an active role, perhaps at the highest level, in commemorating the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), in October. Concerning the peace process that is under way in Havana, I would like to assure the Council that the parties have understood that this is a cross-cutting issue that will be reflected in the peace agreement and in future post-conflict policies.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for your initiative in organizing today's debate.

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Nordic countries of Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway and my own country, Sweden.

First, I would like to thank the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, for her statement and for her activities and hard work. I would also like to thank Ms. Hamsatu Allamin for her participation in today's meeting. The role and influence of civil society in preventing conflict, building peace and promoting human rights is essential and it should be supported.

We warmly welcome the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) and its concrete and specific recommendations on actions, and we commend Special Representative Bangura and her Office for their work in this regard. I would also like to commend the Team of

Experts on Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict in strengthening the capacities of States to address such violence, but despite rising recognition and attention to this issue, the picture is appalling. Nothing less than zero tolerance is acceptable in this area.

The fight to prevent and eradicate conflict-related sexual violence must be pursued on several levels. These crimes do not emerge in a vacuum; they take place against a backdrop of structural, gender-based discrimination. Sexual violence is a reflection of gender inequalities. Therefore, a systematic and broad gender approach, which includes increasing women's empowerment through political participation and influence, strengthening women's economic rights and empowerment, promoting and protecting sexual and reproductive health and rights, improving women's and girls' security and furthering the education of women and girls, needs to be applied. These issues are fundamental.

I would like to raise three more points. First, measures dealing with the consequences of sexual violence need to be stepped up. Assistance to survivors and witnesses, including sexual and reproductive health services and psychosocial, legal and livelihood support, is crucial, as was stressed by my Colombian colleague. It is urgent that we take further concrete steps to ensure accountability and end impunity, as many around this table have said today. We welcome and support the efforts of the Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and the ongoing work of Justice Rapid Response and UN-Women for enhancing the capacity to investigate sexual and gender-based violent crimes which deny women and girls their human rights.

Secondly, there is a growing recognition that men should be involved to a larger extent in the work in favour of gender equality, as it cannot be left to women alone. There is a need to look at the impact of masculine identities on gender inequality, conflict and violence. Evidence suggests that violent notions of masculinity not only perpetuate gender-based violence but can also fuel armed conflict, while more positive notions of masculinity could be instrumental in promoting peace.

Thirdly, we note the rise of violent extremism and terrorism, which are often built on perceptions that deny women their enjoyment of human rights. More attention on the human rights of women is therefore needed, particularly in the context of terrorism and counter-terrorism, especially with regard to the specific consequences of violent extremism on women's and girls' rights. Sexual violence and the denial of rights and freedoms, including the right to control their sexuality and reproduction, are integral to the ideology of extremist groups and used as part of a strategy to spread terror, persecute ethnic, religious and sexual minorities, and suppress whole communities that oppose these groups' ideology. It is clearly a tactic of terror and needs to be addressed in the international community's response. We therefore welcome the recommendation that efforts to prevent and address sexual violence and promote human rights of women should be closely and strategically aligned with efforts to prevent violent extremism. Conflict-related sexual violence should be a topic fully integrated into the work of relevant Security Council sanctions committees.

Women protection advisers and gender advisers have a central role to play in ensuring competence and knowledge in order for United Nations missions to meet actual needs in the field. All missions should have a gender adviser with a sufficiently high level of authority and who should work directly with the mission leadership. Gender advisers, gender focal points and women protection advisers should be funded from the regular budget. Nevertheless, the ultimate responsibility to secure the gender dimension naturally lies with the leadership of the mission.

The Nordic countries are firm supporters, including financially, of United Nations Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. We believe that United Nations Action makes the United Nations system work in a more holistic and coordinated way.

Lastly, the important role of media and civil society, including women's rights organizations, should not be underestimated. We need to draw on their knowledge and experience and recognize the pivotal role they play in changing social norms, attitudes and behaviours and help ensure that women's rights are upheld and that their voices are fully heard.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Brazil.

Mr. Antonio de Aguiar Patriota (Brazil): I thank the President for convening today's debate. I would like to thank Special Representative Zainab Hawa Bangura for her leadership. I also thank the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for its commitment.

Brazil strongly condemns the repugnant use of sexual violence as a weapon of war. Serious violations such as rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancies, all of which constitute crimes against humanity, continue to occur on a massive scale during armed conflicts around the world. This dire situation is worsened by the fact that victims are often afraid to expose the abuses they have endured due to the absence of a protective environment and a fear of stigmatization and punishment. We expect this challenge to be at the core of the Council's upcoming high-level review of women and peace and security.

As the annual report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) correctly points out, sexual violence can also be a method of terror. Brazil deplores the fact that non-State actors with extremist ideologies have deliberately employed this appalling tactic to subjugate, humiliate and disseminate fear and distress.

National Governments bear the primary responsibility for the protection of civilians under their jurisdiction, including of those who are most vulnerable to sexual abuse. In this regard, the international community should encourage and help States to fully exercise their responsibility. Ensuring justice for all victims and accountability for all perpetrators is of great importance in tackling the menace of sexual violence in conflict and upholding the tenets of international humanitarian law. Peace negotiations, mediation processes and power-sharing agreements should all embrace the specific legal, medical and psychosocial needs of victims of sexual abuse. The complementary jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court may play a decisive role in this regard.

Above all, the wisest and most effective way to counter the martial use of sexual violence would be to redouble our efforts to prevent conflict. Apart from traditional diplomatic instruments for the peaceful resolution of disputes, this could be achieved through more ambitious policies to promote awareness for gender-based questions at the highest levels of peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding endeavours. Recent experience suggests that women can play a pivotal role in overcoming ethnic and sectarian divides in order to seek peace, justice and tolerance.

The Peacebuilding Commission, which was chaired by Brazil last year, has acknowledged the link between the advancement of women and the establishment of sustainable peace. In the same vein, the Peacebuilding Fund has financed projects to support victims of sexual and gender-based violence in Nepal and Liberia, inter alia. Through South-South cooperation, Brazil is also involved in initiatives aimed at assisting victims of sexual and gender-based violence and combating impunity in countries affected by conflict or instability, in particular Haiti, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Guinea-Bissau.

Multidimensional peacekeeping missions are also instrumental in preventing conflict-related sexual violence and can profoundly impact women's lives on the ground, not only by providing a secure environment for women and girls but also by helping law enforcement bodies to address gender-based crimes and by facilitating women's participation in decision-making processes. In this regard, Brazil expects the women and peace and security agenda to be duly considered in the discussions and deliberations of the high-level panels on United Nations peacekeeping operations and on the United Nations peacebuilding architecture.

Within the sphere of responsibility of the General Assembly, Brazil will chair the sixtieth session of the Commission on the Status of Women with the firm conviction that gender issues are of critical concern. We believe that every public policy should reflect the imperatives of respecting, protecting and empowering women and girls. This cannot be achieved without fully engaging men and counting on their unwavering support, which is why the Brazilian Government has endorsed the HeForShe solidarity campaign launched by UN-Women.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the fact that Brazil attaches the utmost priority to the women and peace and security agenda of the Security Council. We hope this cross-cutting agenda will inform all major decisions to be taken by the Organization and that the international community can recommit to joining forces to eradicate the scourge of sexual violence in conflict.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Mexico.

Mr. Montaño (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mexico thanks Jordan for holding this open debate and welcomes the statements made at the start of the debate, in particular the briefing by Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

As highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203), sexual violence in conflict situations affects millions of people, especially women and girls, and at times is a crucial part of the strategy through which armed groups humiliate their opponents and intimidate the populations among which they operate. My delegation believes that this scourge constitutes a threat to international peace and security, given, among other factors, its impact on the societies of countries in conflict — before, during and after hostilities — and the fact that it hinders peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

It is unacceptable that in the twenty-first century sexual violence is still being used as a weapon of war. Just in the last year, we witnessed new forms of such violence. The relevant report of the Secretary-General leaves no room for doubt. Cases of rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage perpetrated by extremist groups, including using them as terrorist tactics, continue to increase.

The common thread running through all conflict-related sexual violence can also be found in structural gender discrimination and in the exclusion of women from political life. In the fight against sexual violence, it is critical that efforts for conflict prevention promote equality and the rule of law through the creation of institutions that take into account gender issues.

Mexico acknowledges the Organization's efforts to advance the women-and-peace-and-security agenda within and outside the United Nations system. In 2013, my Government accepted an invitation from the United Kingdom to lead the initiative to prevent sexual violence in conflict at the regional level. We acknowledge the support that several States have given us.

In addition, the adoption, in June 2014, of the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict was a step in the right direction. The core function of the Protocol — namely, to prosecute those responsible and provide comprehensive care to victims — also serves as a vital tool for authorities, motivating them to undertake more clear and expeditious investigations in cases of sexual violence at the national level and provide care for survivors.

The lack of rules and institutions to protect the rights of women in most armed conflicts is a catalyst for the commission of such crimes. Taking into account the fact that acts of sexual violence are premeditated and pursue specific goals, it is imperative that they be punished through national judicial systems in all States. Those who commit such crimes should not have impunity as an ally. The implementation of a system of national and international cooperation for accountability is essential.

Mexico supports the Secretary-General's recommendation that the Security Council continue to use all the means at its disposal regarding conflicts so as to ensure that international law is respected. We believe that it is particularly relevant to refer cases to the International Criminal Court and further to include and highlight the issue of sexual violence in the work of the sanctions committees.

Fifteen years after the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), my delegation welcomes the global efforts to increase the number of women participating in peacekeeping operations and special political missions. We trust that the strategic reviews on sanctions and peacekeeping operations currently being carried out will take into account the commitments and priorities of the women-and-peace-and-security agenda. We also consider it essential that revisions of peacekeeping mandates contemplate measures to prevent sexual violence. Strengthening the mandates of those missions with women protection advisers is a good start in that direction.

Mexico is aware that one of the main challenges to ensuring effective action by the United Nations is obtaining valid, representative, relevant and timely information that has been collected on the ground. Therefore, we appreciate the efforts and initiative of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Providing comprehensive responses that promote women's education and empowerment is key to combating violent extremism. Women are crucial actors in peace and ceasefire processes, and we must encourage their decisive participation in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration measures and in security-sector reform. The role of women is a significant part of the message being spread by radical extremist groups, and it is therefore vital that efforts to counteract that message take into account all stakeholders.

Finally, my delegation welcomes the efforts of countries such as Spain and Colombia to support and give a voice to victims of violent extremism, particularly women, using their national experience to generate best practices on access to justice for victims.

Through the National Women's Institute, Mexico promotes public policies based on gender and intercultural perspectives that are aimed at promoting the empowerment of women and making them active participants in efforts to ensure respect for their rights. These policies serve as a counterweight to extremism, as they represent significant progress in gender equality and thus lead to stability and development for peoples.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Mr. Prosor (Israel): I thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/203) and Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Zainab Bangura for her briefing.

Sexual violence in conflict has become a weapon of choice because it is cheap, silent and effective. Instead of bullets or bombs, the perpetrators employ barbarism and brutality. Sexual violence in conflict ruins lives, fuels conflict and causes lasting damage. The suffering caused by sexual violence does not end even if the women are released or escape. Survivors are often stigmatized by their communities, rejected by their families and infected with sexually transmitted diseases, and they are at increased risk for committing suicide.

For all of those reasons, sexual violence is almost universally underreported. For each rape reported, it is estimated that 10 to 20 go unreported. The great injustice is that, in the aftermath of sexual violence, the women affected live in shame while the perpetrators live free.

I look around the world today and see an epidemic of sexual violence. The number of victims is so large and so overwhelming that we often lose sight of the fact that we are speaking about individuals. We are speaking about Arwa, a 15-year-old Yazidi girl who was captured and raped by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) fighters and whose sisters are still in the hands of the Islamic State. We are speaking about Noora, an 11-year-old from Yemen, who was forced to marry a much older man, who abused her. Arwa and Noora have been robbed of their childhoods, families and dreams. Many other girls and women have also been robbed of their lives. They may have been silenced, but we cannot be silent.

We cannot be silent when we are told that female genital mutilation and forced marriage are acceptable cultural norms. They are not. We cannot be silent when extremists misconstrue religion to permit sexual assault and slavery. There can be zero tolerance for barbaric acts that should have been relegated to the dark ages.

Our family of nations is failing millions of families throughout the world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. With every passing day, ISIS militants brutalize and enslave scores of women. Last summer, ISIS advanced to the remote communities of northern Iraq, lining up men by the side of the road and shooting them into mass graves. They kidnapped thousands of Yazidi and Christian women and girls and herded them into Mosul's Badush prison. The reports from the prison are shocking. Women are raped numerous times a day. Young girls are forced to call their parents to detail being gang-raped by dozens of men. The captured women and girls are sold as wives to Islamic fighters for as little as $25, or given as "sabaya", a reward for fighters.

ISIS is just one of the radical extremist groups seeking to subjugate women. There is also Boko Haram in Nigeria and in Chad, Al-Qaida in Yemen, as well as like-minded militias in Libya and Al-Shabaab in East Africa. Those groups seek to control every area of a woman's life, including how she dresses, how she spends her days, whom she marries and how many children she will have.

Sexual violence as a tool in war is not a women's issue, it is a crime of humanity committed against humanity. Victims of sexual violence should not stand alone. All of us — Governments, civil society and United Nations agencies — must work together to pass stronger laws, strengthen enforcement mechanisms and introduce tougher penalties for offenders. If a nation refuses to prosecute domestic sexual abuse, marital rape and honour killings in times of peace, then there is little hope for justice in times of war and conflict.

Our sages teach us that "It is not what one says, but what one does, that makes all the difference in the world."

We have heard the debates and adopted the resolutions, but we have yet to make the difference that we need to make. The time has come for meaningful action. The victims and survivors of sexual violence deserve nothing less.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Hungary.

Ms. Bogyay (Hungary): Hungary takes a stand against the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war. We fully support and have joined the "Get Cross!" global campaign of the United Nations.

I wish to thank you, Madam President, and Jordan for choosing an old monster afflicting humankind as the topic of today's open debate. I also wish to thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Allamin of Nigeria for sharing so openly those shocking and personal accounts.

Hungary fully aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I said "old monster" because women and girls have always been particularly vulnerable victims during armed conflicts; however, in modern history sexual violence is often used as a weapon of war to demoralize women or the communities to which they belong. Also, sexual and gender-based violence rarely cease at the end of hostilities, but continue well into the post-conflict phase.

We know only too well from history that sexual violence is often used by people with guns and power as part of a multifaceted strategy to terrorize populations, displace communities, humiliate women, children and men and destroy their human dignity for the rest of their lives. Those crimes are serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and represent one of the cruelest forms of discrimination against women, which the international community must not tolerate. In that context, Hungary firmly supports the international efforts aimed at eliminating all forms of sexual violence in conflict.

In that spirit, a high-level Hungarian delegation participated in the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in London last June. The Hungarian Government joined the Call to Action on Protecting Women and Girls in Emergencies and the Girl Summit 2014 charter on ending female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage.

We are deeply troubled by the harrowing accounts of sexual violence used as a tactic of war described in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203). Sexual violence remains chronically underreported as a result of fear and stigmatization. We support the urgent recognition that sexual violence can not only be employed as a tactic of war but, indeed, as a tactic of terror.

We would like to see more women as official peacekeepers and peacemakers to strengthen communication in the field. Today's armed conflicts are increasingly characterized by extremist ideologies and ethnic or religious divisions, thus presenting new challenges for the international community.

We consider the criminal activities of Al-Qaida, Daesh, Boko Haram and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as shocking news. In our view, ISIL's targeting of women and girls, especially those belonging to ethnic and religious minorities — including Christians, Yazidis and women of other faiths — is also shocking news.

Also, using sexual violence as a form of persecution to forcibly displace populations is particularly worrisome. Displaced and refugee girls face particular risks and are more vulnerable to sexual abuse, as witnessed in refugee camps. A recent United Nations inter-agency report revealed that rates of early marriage in refugee camps are on the rise, thus putting those girls at a higher risk of sexual abuse.

As others have today, we agree with the Secretary-General's recommendation that effective counter-terrorism strategies need to address the use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror and be adapted accordingly.

We firmly believe that those crimes must be prosecuted and punished under national and international law. Regrettably, however, impunity for perpetrators remains a major challenge, as we know. We support the efforts of the United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict aimed at assisting national authorities in criminal investigation and prosecution, the collection and preservation of evidence and criminal law reform.

The Declaration of Commitment to End to Sexual Violence in Conflict, endorsed by 144 Member States, including Hungary, in September 2013, is an important achievement in raising awareness and ending the silence surrounding this atrocious crime — as is today's meeting in the Council. It is now imperative that the international community live up to its political commitment by way of concrete and measurable action.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Japan.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): I would like to express my gratitude to you, Madam President, for convening today's meeting. I very much appreciate that you yourself are presiding during lunch-time. I would also like to thank Ms. Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Allamin for their briefings.

Last summer, when Special Representative Bangura visited Japan, she further opened our eyes to the importance of sexual violence in conflict. We look forward to her presence once again at the World Assembly for Women to be held in Tokyo in August.

Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's report on this agenda item (S/2015/203). It is a particularly helpful tool for the Security Council to continuously monitor the situation in the countries listed, so that it can reinforce national-level policy recommendations on each country.

Today I would like to speak briefly about two points: first, the importance of support for the security and judicial sectors, and, secondly, counter-measures to violent extremist groups.

On the first point, the Japanese Government fully supports the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's priority objective of strengthening national ownership, leadership and responsibility to cope with sexual violence in conflict. In that regard, I wish to emphasize the importance of fully involving national military forces and the police and judicial sectors in this agenda. Member States should support Governments in building capacity for those sectors.

Regarding this particular point, Japan is actively supporting the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's Team of Experts. For example, we are assisting in the reinforcement of the judicial system and the special police unit on women and children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I was encouraged by the statement made earlier by Mrs. Mabunda Lioko of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the effect that that assistance is well appreciated and utilized.

Secondly, the measures enacted with respect to State actors are not enough to cope with violent extremist groups. I am shocked that the abduction of nearly 300 girls by Boko Haram in Nigeria a year ago today has not yet been solved. It is unacceptable that the rise of extremist groups is continuing, such as that of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Iraq and Syria.

As the Secretary-General's report points out, the recent acts of barbarity by extremist groups shows the use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror in order to achieve strategic objectives. Such extremist groups aim to create their ideal State by controlling the community through fear. They also use abducted women and girls as a reward for soldier recruitment and a source of income.

Yesterday, my Mission co-hosted a BBC film screening and panel discussion with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the International Peace Institute and the Iraqi Mission. The aim was to examine the current situation with respect to sexual violence by looking at the abductions of Yazidi women and girls by ISIL in Iraq. Yesterday's discussion gave us the impression that the extent of the terror that these groups instil is not fully felt. It is very timely that Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura is starting her trip to the Middle East tomorrow; we expect positive results.

We have to analyse the objectives of these groups, which are still on the rise, while the Security Council needs to build a counter-strategy that recognizes the methods that they employ and develop new counter-measures.

Japan fully supports the mandate of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Last year, we became the top donor to her Office, and last month we contributed $2.5 million in additional financial support. We are concerned that only a handful of donors are contributing to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. We encourage other Members to join us in providing financial support to this important Office.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Mr. António.

Mr. António (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to warmly congratulate you, Madam President, on the assumption by your country, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, of the presidency of the Security Council for this month.

I thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her very comprehensive report. I also thank Ms. Hamsatu Allamin, civil society representative in this debate. We welcome the presence and participation this morning of eminent persons who kindly agreed to come to New York to take part in this debate.

This debate, whose topic is sexual violence against women in conflict situations, is taking place in the context of the commemoration of several legal and political landmarks on women and peace and security. Indeed, this year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000); the thirtieth anniversary of the third World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi; and the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

For African women, the year 2015 is particularly significant because it forms part of the celebration of the African Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063, as well as of the commemoration of the fifth anniversary of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020. In the context of these celebrations, our debate today should not be limited to launching commemorative celebrations but, rather, should be an objective assessment of the state of implementation of the commitments undertaken so as to renew our commitment with respect to this issue.

An examination of current theatres of armed conflict and their recent evolution makes it clear that women are among the primary victims, who continue to be subjected to heinous criminal acts such as rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy or sterilization. Unfortunately, Africa is affected by this scourge, as was underscored by the three African Security Council members and by Ms. Bangura and Ms. Allamin in their respective presentations.

The statement made by Mrs. Jeannine Mabunda Lioko of the Democratic Republic of the Congo spoke volumes and was extremely instructive about the challenges facing the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its response with respect to this scourge, which, based on the information she gave us, is beginning to bear fruit. Given these challenges, the international community should pool, coordinate and scale up its efforts so as to strengthen prevention and suppression measures as well as tackle the root causes of sexual violence through the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The African Union is making determined efforts to combat violence against women, be it in time of war, peace or post-conflict reconstruction. In addition to its accession to existing international legal frameworks, the AU in recent years has developed several legal and political instruments relating to women and peace and security. These include the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa; the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa; the gender policy adopted by the African Union in 2009; and the proclamation of the African Women's Decade 2010-2020.

The vision enshrined in these instruments focuses on three areas of action: prevention, protection and the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes. In order to achieve that vision, courageous steps have been taken.

First, this issue was dealt with at the highest level of the pan-African organization by including it on the agenda of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union.

Secondly, an annual open meeting has been organized since 2010 in the African Union Peace and Security Council on the issue of the vulnerability of women and children in conflict situations in Africa.

Thirdly, in January 2014, Ms. Bineta Diop was appointed Special Envoy for Women, Peace and Security. Since her appointment, she has undertaken missions in several conflict zones. Moreover, the Special Envoy was mandated by the African Union Peace and Security Council, at its meeting on 16 December 2014, to develop a framework for the follow-up to, and acceleration of, the implementation of the various instruments adopted on the continent with regard to women and peace and security.

Fourthly, efforts were intensified to ensure strict compliance with the principle of parity among elected and appointed officials, in particular in the areas of peace and security. Therefore, half of the Commission's leaders are women, including the Chairperson of the Commission herself, Ms. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma. The number of women representatives and special envoys on the ground has increased from 1 to 11 since 2014. In addition, three of the five members of the African Union Panel of the Wise are women.

Fifthly, the African Union Commission committed to accelerating progress in the implementation of the African Union's programme Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020.

Sixthly, in June 2014, the African Union Commission launched a five-year programme entitled "Gender, Peace and Security". The programme is designed to provide a framework for the development of strategies and effective mechanisms to increase women's participation in the promotion of peace and security. It also seeks to improve the protection of women in conflict and post-conflict situations in Africa.

Mr. Omaish took the Chair.

In the same vein, I would like to recall the importance of the agreement signed on the margins of the twenty-second African Union Summit between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Department of Peace and Security of the African Union. The agreement provides a framework for establishing closer cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union in key areas with regard to prevention and the response to sexual violence in conflict situations in Africa. We would also like to note that there is an existing agreement between the African Union and UN-Women on various aspects of the women and peace and security agenda.

In conclusion, let me stress that, despite the persistence of several challenges, the African Union remains determined to continue its efforts to restore the African woman's true place as the generator of social and economic development of our societies.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Haydar (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We have carefully read the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) prepared by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. While we appreciate Ms. Bangura's efforts, her understanding of the events in Syria regrettably remains fundamentally partial and one-sided, like her two previous reports (S/2013/149 and S/2014/181).

In order to assess the events in Syria objectively and without politicization, the Special Representative should respond to the repeated invitations that the Syrian Government has extended to her to visit Syria and the region, which we recently agreed to. The Syrian Government looks forward to her visit, which will enable the Special Representative to accurately report on sexual violence in Syria and to document the responsibility of the armed terrorist groups, regardless of their names, for acts of murder, abduction and rape along sectarian lines, gang rapes, enslavement, torture and sexual violence against women and girls in Syria.

Those crimes are part of the Salafi and Takfiri ideology, which the armed terrorist groups seek to propagate in the area and the world. Those terrorist groups have persisted in their criminality, to the point that the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria has opened camps for the recruitment of women and girls in the northern countryside of Aleppo in order to train them on suicide operations, on the one hand, and to recruit them for sexual violence, on the other. They have also issued a manual for dealing with women as spoils of war and how to capture and sexually assault them by way of one of the most heinous forms of sexual violence against women and violations of their dignity.

In the context of the present report, my delegation would like to make the following comments on the section regarding the situation in Syria.

First, those who prepared the report based themselves and their allegations against the Syrian Government on the reports issued by the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic. My country would like to reaffirm its position that the work of the commission since its establishment has been neither professional nor objective, but rather has been highly politicized and was essentially based on allegations and lies aimed at distorting the image of the Syrian Arab Republic. In that regard, I would like to stress that the Syrian Government rejects any allegations made against the Syrian armed forces and denounces the fact that such allegations continue, especially in view of the fact that the Syrian authorities have not received any requests from any offices of the United Nations in Damascus or from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to visit any site to verify any information they received — be it from their private sources or the Syrian Government. I assure the Council without hesitation that the relevant authorities in Syria would be happy to receive any specific accurate information regarding such violations, which our Government and army reject, and that it would address such allegations with the utmost firmness, in accordance with the law and the customs and traditions of our people.

Secondly, we reiterate the need for the Special Representative in her future reports to address the fatwa regarding sexual jihad, which is part and parcel of her mandate, and to put an end to these morally deviant and barbarous fatwas, especially since representatives of several States have affirmed that girls from their countries have fallen victims to such heinous fatwas.

Recent among such statements was the statement of the British authorities that they had lost contact with three British girls who crossed into Syria, having fallen victims to such a fatwa and having been recruited through social media. The Syrian side will present to Ms. Bangura some of the victims of the sexual jihad and the practices of the armed terrorist groups against women and girls.

Thirdly, the suffering of the Syrian women displaced in the refugee camps in neighbouring States is essential and should be stressed. In that regard, we must express our serious concern over the continued suffering of Syrian girls and women in those camps and the fact that they are subjected to trafficking, rape, forced marriage and insecurity. All of that has been documented in reports of the United Nations and international organizations concerned with the rights of the child, including the recent report by UNICEF, which indicated that the doubling in the number of rapes of Syrian female minors in camps in Jordan and Turkey was comparable to the incidence of rape at the beginning of the Syrian crisis, which was 32 per cent in the first quarter of 2014. We must also recall the exploitation of the Syrian female minority in Lebanon as one State has begun to arrange marriages without registering them in their official records. Reports have shown that they are married to wealthy men from the Gulf who have become accustomed to buying Syrian female refugee minors as wives in the slave markets in the refugee camps, with the help and supervision of non-governmental organizations working under the cover of doing humanitarian work.

Finally, representatives of a number of States have expressed concern over the spread of sexual violence against Syrian women. However, they ignore the fact of the policies of their own Governments against my country, which is the reason for such suffering, due to the involvement of those Governments in financing terrorism, facilitating its spread, securing its financing and building camps to train terrorists before they are sent to Syria where they are re-branded as the moderate opposition.

Syria is committed to supporting international efforts to combat all forms of sexual violence and to punish the perpetrators and instigators, on the one hand, and to break the unjustifiable silence on the part of numerous specialized United Nations bodies, on the other.

We would also like to affirm our wish to continue to cooperate with the United Nations, especially with Ms. Bangura, to reveal the truth about Syria free of politicization. The competent authorities remain ready fully prepared to receive any names or incidents from the Special Representative for investigation in the context of continued cooperation with her Office.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Luxembourg.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): Allow me, at the outset, to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ms. Zainab Bangura, as well as the representative of civil society, Ms. Hamsatu Allamin, for their briefings and for their daily commitment. I am grateful to the Jordanian presidency for convening this important open debate.

Luxembourg aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union.

Ever since the Security Council recognized, 15 years ago, that women were disproportionately affected by conflicts and that this had consequences for reconciliation and peace processes, the response of the international community has been remarkable with respect to legal norms. The Council has adopted at least seven resolutions on the matter, including the landmark resolution 1820 (2008), while the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflicts, presented in 2013 during the sixty-eighth session at the initiative of the United Kingdom, has been endorsed by more than 150 Member States, including Luxembourg.

However, despite those efforts, the scourge of sexual violence is far from having been eradicated. Just the opposite is true. As the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/203) notes, disquieting new tendencies have appeared. The emergence of violent extremist groups such as Daesh and Boko Haram has aggravated an already difficult situation for women and girls in the areas concerned. Yesterday we observed the sad anniversary of the abduction in Chibok, Nigeria, of hundreds of high school girls, who were subsequently reduced to slaves by Boko Haram. We condemn in the strongest possible terms those savage acts, which have also been documented in two recent reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The inclusion of such gruups in the annex to the report of the Secretary-General is amply justified.

What makes resolution 1325 (2000) so noteworthy is the coherence with which it addresses the situation of women in the context of conflicts and questions of peace and security, proposing that prevention and protection are two sides of the same coin. The violence to which women and girls are exposed in times of conflict — in particular sexual violence — is exacerbated by the structural weaknesses of societies during times of peace. That is also the reason that we must pay particular attention to the warning signs of conflict. In fact, conflicts are generally preceded by a noticeable rise in human rights violations and violence towards women.

Allow me to mention some of the tools that the Security Council should use, in our view, to protect civilians from acts of sexual violence.

The Council should continue to integrate the provisions of its resolutions on women and peace and security in all its decisions, including resolutions and presidential statements of regional purview. The Council should also ensure that sexual violence becomes an integral criterion for designation within all the relevant sanctions committees, and those committees should ensure that the names of presumed perpetrators of acts of sexual violence are systematically entered on their lists. Resolution 2206 (2015), adopted on 3 March, is a positive example in that regard, insofar as it defines the fact of committing acts of sexual violence against civilians, especially women and children, as a criterion for designation to be monitored by the new Canctions Committee on South Sudan. Finally, the Council should act with determination to ensure that the presumed perpetrators of systematic acts of sexual violence and those in the chain of command should be handed over to justice, including through referral to the International Criminal Court those situations in which such acts are committed. I am thinking particularly of the case of Syria.

With regard to the concerned Member States, they must respect international law and fight against impunity. It is incumbent upon them to show that they take women's autonomy seriously by integrating them into negotiations and conflict resolution processes, by making the issue of sexual violence an integral part of peace agreements and by reforming their security and justice sectors. It is up to the international community to support those efforts. Only by joining forces will we succeed in putting an end to conflict-related sexual violence.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): I thank the Presiden, for organizing this meeting under the Jordanian presidency. I would also like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zainab Bangura and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin of Nigeria for their briefings.

We commend the attention devoted by the Council to the issue of sexual violence in conflict, and the efforts of Special Representative Bangura. We also support the work of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict. The efforts made so far to tackle the immense challenge at hand deserve appreciation. Nevertheless, the severe effects of conflicts on women and girls, as well as on other vulnerable groups, in various regions of the world continue to constitute a significant problem that needs to be addressed.

Seventy years after the foundation of the United Nations, the elimination of conflict and related violence stands out as a challenge that the international community has yet to meet, So long as conflicts exist, pursuing the elimination of sexual violence in conflict in isolation cannot yield the desired results. The new complexities surrounding the changing nature of conflicts create an even more worrisome development. The challenges we collectively face today include a growing number of intra-State conflicts, protracted crises, humanitarian emergencies, the emergence of violent extremist groups across a broad geographical area and the effects of inhumane terrorist acts. The international community should pay particular attention to strategies for preventing and responding to sexual-based violence, which is often used as a weapon of war and as a strategy to deprive human beings of their most basic rights — namely, their safety, security and dignity. Such crimes should not go unrecorded and unpunished. To prevent sexual violence in conflicts we must end impunity for both the perpetrators and for those in the chain of command. Punishment for crimes often serves as a deterrent.

In the face of the threats and needs faced by civilians, a stronger and more inclusive approach, in line with the goals and objectives set by resolution 1325 (2000), is required.

First, strengthening our political will to achieve gender equality, the empowerment of women and girls and recognition of their human rights is a necessary step. As we embark upon a process to develop a set of sustainable development goals for the post-2015 development agenda, we believe that gender equality and the empowerment of women should be at the centre of all our solutions and commitments. That will also help further our agenda on women and peace and security. Ending violence against women is a part of this effort. The Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women, known as the Istanbul Convention, stands out as a landmark document in this regard. Turkey is committed to foster the objectives of the Convention and stands ready to share its own experiences in its implementation.

Secondly, the horrific acts perpetrated by terrorist organizations such as Daesh, Boko Haram and Al-Shabab require a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy. In that vein, eliminating the root causes of the conflict is essential.

Thirdly, ensuring a comprehensive approach to decision-making and policy, as well as peace processes, mediation efforts, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, are another important step. Women's meaningful participation in those cycles has the potential to ensure better early-warning systems, ending impunity for sexual violence-related crimes and stronger deterrence and prevention strategies.

Lastly, broadening the gender perspectives in the United Nations system's normative and operational frameworks, entities and practices will enhance the effectiveness of its actions in responding to conflict-related sexual violence, and help address the special needs of women and girls in humanitarian emergencies and protracted crises.

I will not take the Council's time by responding to one delegation's renewed, baseless allegations, which we categorically deny.

As the crisis in Syria enters its fifth year, millions of Syrians, particularly women and girls, continue to live under the threat of sexual violence. I would like to mention some of the best practices we have implemented to tackle sexual violence in conflicts, based on our experience in responding to the forced displacement of Syrians and Iraqis due the tragedies in their countries.

In terms of participation, we are giving priority to women's participation in the temporary protection centres, with their inclusion in both decision-making and administration. Regarding protection, an adequate number of women staff is employed in the centres to maintain quality health, education and security services for women and girls. On prevention, special measures are in place to prevent assaults within the centres and to protect vulnerable groups. Outside the centres, measures are taken to promote the monitoring and prevention of domestic and sexual violence. In terms of empowerment, the enrolment of girls in schooling and continuing education for women remains a priority policy.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our full support to international, regional and national efforts to end conflict-related sexual violence and to respond to its consequences.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Viet Nam.

Mrs. Nguyen (Viet Nam): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the ten member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) — namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and my own country, Viet Nam.

We commend the Jordanian presidency for convening this open debate on women and peace and security, with a focus on conflict-related sexual violence. We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/203) and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict for her informative briefing.

ASEAN welcomes the progress made in implementing key aspects of the Security Council's landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent relevant resolutions. We are pleased to see more women participating as key actors in conflict resolution and peace processes. The capacity of national rule of law and justice actors in all regions has been strengthened. More has been done to better protect women and girls from sexual violence, gender-based discrimination and social exclusion. We look forward to the comprehensive review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) byMember States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders.

ASEAN condemns all forms of violence against women and girls, in particular sexual violence. We are deeply concerned about the rise in conflict-related sexual violence, which affects and threatens the well-being of women and girls in many parts of the world. It is particularly alarming to witness the horrendous widespread sexual violence, including abductions, sexual slavery, rape and forced marriage, used by extremist terrorist groups as a tactic of war to deliberately target civilian populations, as detailed in the Secretary-General's report. We urge Member States, United Nations entities, the relevant international and regional organizations and other stakeholders to redouble their efforts to address the multidimensional challenges relating to the prevention of sexual violence, victim assistance and the empowerment of women.

Conflict-related sexual violence is best prevented by addressing its root cause and preventing armed conflict itself. Conflict-prevention mechanisms, especially those under United Nations auspices, should be promoted. Political reconciliation, the rule of law, socioeconomic development and poverty eradication are the foundations for sustainable opportunities for women and girls. Institutions for gender equality and respect for and promotion of human rights at national and international levels should be continuously strengthened.

The perpetrators of sexual violence must not go unpunished. But more important, victims of conflict-related sexual violence must be provided with assistance and services tailored to their specific needs. They must be protected against stigmatization and exclusion, and given the opportunity and capability to re-engage and reintegrate with their communities. In a broader sense, we must promote the full and equal political, social and economic participation of women. The inclusion of women and their priorities in all aspects of the peace process is crucial.

ASEAN is of the view that, while States must bear the primary responsibility in these efforts, the United Nations and international community can play their important roles by, inter alia, providing assistance and sharing best practices. In that regard, ASEAN wishes to stress that reports on specific situations should ensure accuracy, objectivity and impartiality, in full consultation with the Member States concerned, and include national efforts to address the situations.

ASEAN is strongly committed to ending sexual violence wherever it occurs. The ASEAN member States have been fulfilling their respective obligations and commitments under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination of Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. We have established legal and policy frameworks, as well as mechanisms, both at the national and regional level, to further enhance the status and welfare of women and girls and to eliminate all forms of violence against women, including sexual violence.

The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights and the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children are actively implementing their respective work plans that aim to promote and protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of women and children in the ASEAN region. The recent workshop to strengthen women's participation in the peace process and conflict resolution, organized by the ASEAN Institute for Peace and Reconciliation on 18 and 19 March in Cebu, the Philippines, highlighted the importance of women's participation in peace processes and conflict resolution in the region, and helped raise awareness on, and promote the implementation of, resolution 1325 (2000) and existing national action plans on women and peace and security.

Conflict-related sexual violence can be stopped if the international community steps up its efforts to put in place comprehensive strategies that protect the rights and fundamental freedoms of women and deliver necessary services for victims and survivors. For its part, ASEAN reiterates its readiness and commitment to join efforts to ensure the elimination of sexual violence, protect and assist victims and enhance the role of women in peace processes.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Hassan (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, on behalf of the Sudan, I express my appreciation to the President for having organized this debate on women and peace and security. We also welcome Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. We take note of the contents of the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203).

The Government of the Sudan attaches particular importance to women's issues, as reflected in a number of our initiatives, including our 25-year women's strategy for the period 2003 to 2027, the national strategy for combating violence against women, the national women's empowerment policy and the national plan for the advancement of women. We also established a unit to combat violence against women, as well as an independent human rights commission, in accordance with the Paris principles. Both of those institutions are headed by women. The Government also devotes particular attention to addressing violence against women, in particular in refugee camps in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states. We do so in cooperation with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the human rights division of the Sudan United Nations country team.

On this day, as the Security Council is discussing this topic, voters in my country are freely exercising their constitutional rights in casting their votes in presidential and parliamentary elections for the second day in a row. Women participated fully at all stages of the preparations for the elections and are now voting side-by-side with men. The rights to run for office and to vote have been enshrined in our legislation and Constitution since the 1950s. Women now occupy 28 per cent of parliamentary seats, including that of Deputy Speaker of the Parliament. In terms of political participation, women have run as candidates for President of the republic. Women now hold several prominent positions, as presidential advisers and ministers, and not only at the helm of ministries related to women's rights but also dealing with other areas of Government.

The Government of the Sudan has adopted legislation aimed at preventing the dangers posed to women and girls by human trafficking. As a transit country for this phenomenon due to our wide expanses of desert, the Sudan hosted a conference to combat human trafficking in the Horn of Africa. That conference attracted broad participation.

With regard to the economic empowerment of women, the Government has implemented the rural women's development programme and established economic empowerment projects, including a women's portfolio, revolving loans and microfinancing projects for women. Sudanese law guarantees equal rights for men and women with regard to property and inheritance without discrimination — in fact, it provides safeguards for women's rights to inheritance that in some cases surpass the percentage accorded to men. Women also enjoy the right to health care, which has resulted in reduced maternal mortality thanks to programmes implemented with UNFPA and UNICEF.

The Government of the Sudan is devoting efforts to deliver services to displaced persons in Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states. Those efforts have been very fruitful, although this is not the appropriate time to list them exhaustively. We must point out that the rebel groups continue to undermine those efforts and are seeking to destabilize the situation through acts of violence, resulting in a severe humanitarian situation for all vulnerable populations, including women. The Government of the Sudan has therefore endeavoured to facilitate the voluntary return of displaced persons through development programmes once situations have regained significant stability.

I must take this opportunity to reject the content of the report presented today and the naïve allegations that were previously propagated by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with regard to the actions in Darfur. I also recall the evidence that we previously presented to the Security Council, some of which has been issued as official documents. That evidence was sufficient to dispel those naïve and baseless lies, which no sane person would believe. The members of the Security Council should know that this microphone has been used as a mouthpiece for lies. There is quite a difference between Amsterdam and Darfur. It is enough that the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) has visited the site and presented a report that has proven those allegations to be lies. We therefore denounce the fact that they have been mentioned again in another report, in particular since reports presented to the Security Council in the name of the Secretary-General must rely on accurate and credible information, not just rumours.

It is unfortunate that the paragraphs regarding the Sudan in the report do not include any reference to, or condemnation of, the acts of rebel groups. Anyone who reads those paragraphs would get the impression that the Government of the Sudan is the only killer — as if it were fighting against itself and its own citizens. That is naïve, and no sane person would believe it.

The paragraphs disregard the significant improvements in the humanitarian situation during the reporting period. The Security Council is currently considering recommendations regarding the future of UNAMID because of the great strides that we have taken in this regard. In the concluding part of the report regarding Sudan, there is a request for cooperation from the Government to allow access to the regions. Apart from the fact that this is an issue of sovereignty, it is also inaccurate because the Government has been cooperating fully with the United Nations and its agencies operating in the Sudan. Immunity was never an obstacle to prosecuting the perpetrators of crimes.

In conclusion, the delegation of the Sudan calls for the adoption of a comprehensive approach to fighting crimes against women. This is a noble cause that has been corrupted by politicization. We must therefore prioritize conflict resolution and provide assistance for reconstruction and addressing refugee issues, and all matters related to the cause of women in conflict. The Sudan also calls for the lifting of restrictions that hamper national efforts in various areas, including disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. I refer in particular to the debts and unilateral sanctions imposed on some conflict regions, including the Sudan. The Sudan reiterates the importance of verifying the accuracy of information, especially before including it in reports presented to the Council.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kazakhstan.

Mr. Rakhmetullin (Kazakhstan): Mr. President, we thank you for convening this open debate concerning the grave crimes committed against women.

The bulk of such crimes are perpetrated by non-State actors, in particular extremist and terrorist groups, including those intending to establish quasi-State entities. Atrocities against women, adolescents and young girls require the attention and immediate action of the international community. Massive, unprecedented flows of refugees, internally displaced persons, and the enforced displacement of entire populations pose a security threat. The Security Council, United Nations peacekeeping operations and political missions must step up their operating capabilities and strategies to deal not just with the phenomenon of extreme enmity and hatred, but also extrajudicial killings and sexual violence, including rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy and enforced sterilization, which have become new weapons of war and tactics of terror. Those threats call for the greater coordination of the United Nations system, including entities concerned with sexual violence and the protection of women, and that also work with regional structures in Africa and the Middle East. The United Nations country teams are also called on to deliver as one. Hence, the mobilization of resources to fund enhanced training and a greater number of qualified personnel is a sine qua non.

Through resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions, the role of women in conflict prevention and resolution, recovery and development is considered vital. They have to be fully engaged in decision-making mechanisms and peace agreements, as well as in the provision of basic survival needs, medical care, education and economic self-reliance. As such, enforcing the rule of law and transitional justice, eliminating gender-based discrimination, and ending all impunity must remain critical to the economic and social empowerment of women. Their goals must be part of comprehensive and multidimensional peacekeeping efforts in hybrid operations to prevent serious international crimes against women.

Commissions of inquiry on various conflicts and UN-Women need to provide regular briefings to the Council. The Council's mandates on women, peace and security should be made the focus of at least one periodic field visit.

Kazakhstan has become increasingly engaged in peacekeeping, starting in 2003 with Iraq and Nepal. We are currently in the Western Sahara, with a deployment to Côte d'Ivoire planned for May. The protection of women and girls, and gender-sensitive approaches are always given attention in the training of my country's peacekeepers. Kazakhstan considers the protection of civilians to be one of its key priorities in its bid for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for 2017-2018. Over the past decade, my country has witnessed increased and complex flows of asylum seekers, refugees, migrants and victims of trafficking in our region. Those challenges have been addressed by numerous regional structures and national initiatives. Kazakhstan initiated the creation of the Kazakhstan Agency for International Development and the United Nations regional hub in Almaty to address these threats and develop resilience.

The stable development of Afghanistan remains the primary focus of Kazakhstan. We have allocated more than $70 million to a wide range of support, from food security and facility, construction to creating special market conditions for petroleum export. The broad focus is also on education, especially for Afghan women and girls. Finally, let me assure the Council that Kazakhstan is commited to joining the global efforts to achieve international peace and security, of which promoting gender equality and empowerment of women is an inseparable component.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt): At the outset, allow me to pay tribute to Jordan for taking the initiative to convene this meeting. We would also like to express our appreciation to Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and her team for the preparation of the informative report before us (S/2015/203). Egypt also commends the activities of United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the activities of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Our meeting today is very timely, falling one month after of the adoption of the political declaration of the Commission on the Status of Women, which reflects the international community's firm commitment to tackling the challenges and remaining gaps in implementation in all 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action — including, inter alia, violence against women, and women and armed conflict.

This year's report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence highlights several emerging concerns, including the perpetration of sexual violence not only as a tactic of war but also as a tactic of terror and extremism. In response to those concerns, the report sets out important recommendations, including on the need to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women in order to address the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, transform harmful social norms and counter the rise of extremism.

In that regard, Egypt would like to highlight several points. First, the threat of terrorism, both in its magnitude and diversity, remains one of the gravest challenges not only to international peace and security, but also to human dignity. It has affected all aspects of our life. It threatens the security and sovereignty of States, the rule of law, freedom and developmental aspects of our societies.

Secondly, sexual violence in conflict is a serious violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. In that regard, Egypt stresses the importance of zero tolerance for sexual violence, ensuring the accountability of its perpetrators by all possible means, whether they have committed, commanded or condoned those crimes.

Thirdly, to eliminate conflict-related sexual violence, efforts must be made to diminish the capacity of non-State terrorist groups in Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, Libya and Yemen that perpetrate sexual violence. The international community must be fully committed to using all means to combat those non-State terrorist groups.

Fourthly, more financial resources have to be secured for the expeditious implementation of the agenda on women, peace and security, with special attention given to conflict-related sexual violence.

Egypt also believes that it is of utmost importance to address the issue of sexual violence during the early stages of peace processes, through mediation efforts and ceasefire and peace agreements, particularly in security arrangement provisions, transitional justice and reparations. Due attention must be given to the survivors of conflict-related sexual violence as an integral part of States' obligations towards them, including by implementing mechanisms aimed at preventing the recurrence of such crimes, as well as providing them with all required services and assistance, including rehabilitation and reintegration efforts.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala.

Ms. Bolaños Pérez (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this open debate on conflict-related sexual violence, a subject that my country has been very active on, based on our firm conviction that we must keep fighting violence against women and girls in every form. I would also like to thank Ms. Zainab Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her briefing, and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin, the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, speaking on behalf of civil society.

Sexual violence is a deplorable phenomenon, related to insecurity, to incomplete disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes, and to the impunity that is associated with weak rule-of-law institutions. We are concerned about the recent cases of sexual slavery, forced marriage and rape by extremist groups that demonstrate that sexual violence has become a terrorist tactic. Every new report from the Secretary-General describes horrendous situations created by offenders, especially those systematic violators identified in the annex to his most recent report (S/2015/203).

The United Nations has adopted specific policies in this area, including creating the office of Special Representative Bangura, implementing provisions for monitoring, analysis and briefings on reports, and deploying women protection advisers in some peacekeeping operations. Despite those achievements, however, the problem persists, as we have recently observed, sadly, in Nigeria, Iraq, South Sudan, Darfur, Syria, Mali, the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to name only a few.

We should not rest until we see the special needs of women and girls on the ground receive the special attention they deserve. We should improve our collection of data disaggregated by gender and age, and ensure gender mainstreaming in all mission activities in the field, particularly in the context of humanitarian assistance and care for displaced persons. The chief challenge for Member States, United Nations and humanitarian actors is the imperative of ensuring and improving a protective environment. We reiterate that it is the responsibility of Member States to protect their own populations, particularly women and girls, the most vulnerable, and we urge everyone to continue making their worthy contributions to dealing with the challenges presented by reality.

The Council should insist that States in conflict or post-conflict situations adopt codes of conduct and action plans for their military forces and work on collecting and preserving evidence, instituting criminal prosecutions and protecting the victims, witnesses and even justice officials themselves, as well as achieving a genuine zero-tolerance policy. At the same time, it is essential that they involve non-governmental organizations and women's organizations dealing with this issue in order to obtain the necessary support.

We reiterate that protecting the human rights of women and girls is not negotiable. We must pool our efforts if we are to ensure true empowerment and the effective implementation of the activities that can help us achieve full respect for international humanitarian and human-rights law. We also stress how important it is that gender equality and the empowerment of women occupy a central place on the post-2015 development agenda and that this goal should emphasize the creation of peaceful societies and institutions, both of which are fundamental to fulfilling our commitments regarding women and peace and security.

Guatemala has taken very concrete action to address sexual violence and strengthen its own national institutions. In recent years we have enacted laws prohibiting femicide and other forms of violence against women, as well as sexual violence, exploitation and trafficking, enabling us to reform the characterization of various crimes in our penal code. In a measure designed to improve the access of women victims of violence to justice, we have established several programmes in the executive branch of the judiciary aimed at eliminating impunity as it affects women.

Combating impunity must continue to be a fundamental aspect of our efforts not just to respond to sexual violence but also to prevent it. In that regard, we support the policy on gender-based and sexual violence crimes established by Ms. Fatou Bensouda, Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court. We must make better and more consistent use of the tools available to the Council in order to bring to justice those who commit or order sexual violence, or who tolerate it by not preventing or punishing it, in accordance with responsibility as it is defined in international criminal law. We should also redouble our efforts to strengthen national judicial capacities and the framework of international justice, including by referring those responsible to the International Criminal Court, and we support intensifying dialogue with the Court.

The Court's 2012 conviction of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo and the referral to it in 2013 of the case concerning Bosco Ntaganda have sent a clear message about the legal consequences of child recruitment, which is considered a war crime. We welcomed the announcement that the trial in the Ntaganda case will be held in Bunia, since that is likely to have a major impact on the affected communities and their victims, showing that justice is being done and thus helping them to close that horrific chapter in their lives.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Latvia.

Ms. Freimane-Deksne (Latvia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of Estonia as well as my own country, Latvia. We would like to thank Jordan for organizing this debate on sexual violence in conflict. We also thank Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin, representing civil society, for their statements and their tireless work on this complex and sensitive issue.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered earlier by the observer of the European Union.

We welcome the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203). It also addresses very disturbing new challenges in the form of sexual violence perpetrated in a context of rising violent extremism. Sexual violence, in the form of rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage, forced pregnancy, torture and human trafficking, has been used by terrorist groups, notably the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, as a tactic for spreading terror, persecuting minorities and suppressing or forcibly displacing communities that oppose their ideology. Women and children are deliberately targeted and their rights violated.

Latvia and Estonia strongly condemn all forms of sexual violence and its use as a tactic of terror and persecution on any grounds. In that regard, we share the Secretary-General's view that efforts to prevent and address sexual violence should be closely and strategically aligned with efforts to prevent violent extremism. Empowering women and girls and establishing respect for their human rights, as well as ensuring women's full participation in decision-making processes, including conflict prevention and resolution, are crucial to ending conflict-related sexual violence.

The effectiveness of efforts to prevent and address conflict-related sexual violence can also be undermined by under-reporting, impunity and a lack of necessary support to survivors of sexual violence. Better coordinated efforts are needed to ensure that survivors of such crimes receive comprehensive care and assistance, including access to sexual and reproductive health services. The international community must work to end the culture of impunity for crimes of sexual violence in conflict. Ensuring the accountability of perpetrators of crimes of sexual violence among State and non-State actors alike is crucial if we are to discourage and ultimately eliminate sexual violence and bring justice to its survivors. While States are primarily responsible for ensuring accountability, the International Criminal Court (ICC) has a central role to play in cases where States lack the capability or political will to do so. Latvia and Estonia support victims of gender-based and sexual violence in countries affected by armed conflict through the Trust Fund for Victims set up by the ICC.

This year is a special one for the women and peace and security agenda, as we will be marking the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000). Latvia and Estonia look forward to the high-level review of the resolution's implementation and have already made national contributions in that regard. Our Governments also endorsed the 2013 Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and supported the Statement of Action issued at the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, held in London last year.

Moreover, we see the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) as an important element in our development cooperation strategies. Latvia has implemented projects aimed at supporting and promoting the role of women in Iraq, Afghanistan and other parts of Central Asia. Similarly, Estonia has contributed to different projects and provided financial support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Too many individuals, families and communities have been affected if not devastated by conflict-related sexual violence. Preventing and responding to sexual violence is vital to resolving conflicts, enabling development and building sustainable peace. The international community has to work together to respond to the urgency of this issue, and Latvia and Estonia are ready to be an active part of those efforts.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Algeria.

Mr. Boukadoum (Algeria) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, most warmly on Jordan's presidency of the Security Council this month. I would also like to thank you for convening today's important debate.

I would like to praise the courage of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura. She has indeed played a key role in crystallizing the international commitment to putting an end to sexual violence in armed conflict.

In spite of the efforts of the international community, including the Security Council, to establish legal frameworks and standards, the phenomenon is spreading and becoming increasingly more complex. Sexual violence is used as a weapon to humiliate the enemy, undermine its dignity, destroy communities, force people to flee their homes, and deliberately spread HIV/AIDS. This terror is particularly atrocious;

it is a scourge that cannot be ignored. It is true that wars often lead to the collapse of legal systems but this does not justify or explain such a horrible violation of human rights. In this context, we reiterate our attachment to resolution 1325 (2000) and all other resolutions concerning sexual violence. We also endorse efforts to swiftly eradicate violence, heal the wounds of victims and reintegrate those who have fled back into society.

I have three points to make in this regard. First, there is a need to scale up efforts to prevent violence — and, naturally, sexual violence — by setting forth national legal frameworks and strengthening the rule of law. There is also a need to improve outreach and awareness raising. The participation of women must be guaranteed in these efforts and there must be a mainstreaming of gender equality in all peacekeeping activities. Women can and must play various roles in times of conflict as in times of peace. In this context, there is a need to provide appropriate training to mediators and all those who participate in the peace process, the cessation of hostilities and ceasefires. Peace agreements also need to include provisions having to do with bolstering the role of women. More attention must be paid to the fate of women who are subject to rape and other forms of sexual violence during conflict. There needs to be a building of national capacity and the drafting of legislation, with adequate resources being allocated. These are sine qua nons for tackling this issue.

Secondly, there is a need to break the wall of silence and raise awareness, which are two key conditions for combating sexual violence and protecting victims from humiliation and stigmatization, providing them with the opportunity and ability to reintegrate into their societies. I would also refer to the importance of awareness-raising campaigns for the larger public, not just through the sanctioning of perpetrators but also through efforts to change mindsets. The end to impunity lies in prosecuting perpetrators; there can be no end to the scourge if perpetrators are not referred to justice. In this regard, we welcome the contribution of the Team of Experts in building national capacities and strengthening national know-how in the area of impunity. Victims of sexual violence have limited legal recourse in the majority of cases. This has to be changed. Otherwise, perpetrators will continue to remain at large and justice will remain unattainable. In this context, we stress the importance of prevention, protection and reintegration. We would also highlight the important role of civil society, women's organizations and religious and social leaders.

Thirdly, while there have been high-level meetings dealing with combating sexual violence in countries in conflict or in post-conflict, including that held in October 2013 (S/PV.7044), and consultations on such international frameworks as resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) and the Protocol on the Prevention and Suppression of Sexual Violence against Women and Children, our commitment is not limited to the United Nations. In fact, there has also been an important African Union initiative. We warmly welcome the United Nations-African Union agreement on the training of peacekeeping staff.

We continue to work nationally in an unstinting manner to promote the role of women, as we continue to believe that women play a key role in social progress and bringing about the end of violence and inequality. We also emphasize the importance of mainstreaming this issue in the mandates of all special political missions and peacekeeping operations. These missions should also have special women protection advisers. We would also like to address the possibility of considering this question in sanctions committees.

Finally, I note that the drive for peace, security and a better future will be in vain if we do not put an end to all violence against women.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Uruguay.

Mr. Dotta (Uruguay) (*spoke in Arabic*): Uruguay would like to thank Jordan for having organized today's debate.

(*spoke in Spanish*)

Uruguay welcomes today's meeting organized by Jordan. The debate was initially presided over by a woman, which is another source of pride for the Kingdom of Jordan and for the Security Council. Uruguay welcomes in particular the heightened attention given to the subject and the valuable statements by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and by Ms. Hamsatu Allamin of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.

For my country, this is a human rights issue, and human rights have priority over any national law. This executive organ of the United Nations should therefore address as effectively as possible an issue that is of great concern to us, given that it affects the fundamental values on which the international community is based.

This debate reaffirms the commitment undertaken by the Council to defending the rights of women and children on the basis of the conviction that violence poses a threat to the maintenance of international peace and security towards which this Organization works.

Sexual violence against women and children is a terror tactic and in 1992 was designated as a crime against humanity by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia. This was reiterated in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which entered into force in 2002.

This year marks 15 years since the adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which reaffirmed the important role that women play in preventing and resolving conflicts and in peacebuilding. As has been mentioned today, that resolution will be reviewed in October, and we are confident that the work of the Council will be effective in making progress towards achieving the goals of that resolution and subsequent resolutions on the subject.

States must be held accountable to fulfil their obligation to protect populations under their sovereign power from massive crimes, as that type of crime, namely mass rapes, forced pregnancies, sexual slavery and other forms of sexual violence, are unfortunately being used as a tactic of war in various conflicts, in contravention of all legal and moral principles. As long as these crimes have no effective punishment and while there is no compulsory jurisdiction that perpetrators are subject to, they will continue and even continue to increase, to our great consternation and that of the international community.

The situation described in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) is very serious. The report states that sexual violence against girls and adolescents in armed conflicts continued to increase in 2014. It also notes an increase in this violence by non-State armed groups. Despite the existence of a normative framework and global tools to combat such violence, as long as there is no effective implementation of those tools at the various levels of countries' domestic law and as long as the perpetrators of such crimes are not brought to justice, there will be no solution. I would like to cite an aspect of what is happening, for example, in Colombia, which is is starting to see success in its fight against this scourge, having adopted policies at the national, departmental and local levels. As noted in the report of the Secretary-General, they have seen positive results, which we hope will continue and further increase in the future.

It is important that countries be obliged to give account to the international community for what occurs within their borders. We cannot remain passive before such crimes. In his report, the Secretary-General expresses deep concern for what is happening in well-known situations such as, to cite a few, the Syrian Arab Republic, the Sudan, South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, among others. We ask ourselves how long we will continue to witness such crimes. How long will we have to watch them on television, to the point that we start to become accustomed to seeing all those women and girls being killed, raped and sold into sexual slavery? How long will we see it as just another news item, not worth stopping for? How long until the Organization and the Council provide an effective response to it?

For my country, sexual violence in armed conflict is of the highest priority. Uruguay participates in amission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with approximately 1,000 troops engaged in protection of civilian tasks, and employing joint protection teams to monitor and address human rights violations in remote areas. These peacekeepers collaborate with civil society organizations, providing them with support in various aspects, including water, food supplies and medical attention. They also conduct patrols to prevent the rape of women and girls in remote situations and places, such as when they go to fetch water.

My delegation wishes to reiterate what has been stated in previous debates regarding the positive feedback loop that exists between participation and protection, a concept that emerged and was highlighted in resolution 1325 (2000). Through this instrument, the Council reiterated the important role that women play in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding.

Consistent with all this, my delegation shares the view that if we are to improve the protection environment for women and girls, we must increase the number of women in the police and military. In this regard, it is regrettable that the figures indicate that, in 2014, approximately 97 per cent of military personnel were men, as were 90 per cent of police officers. We must implement measures to correct that and undertake greater coordination in establishing an effective protection strategy, first and foremost with host countries, which have the primary responsibility to provide protection. That would enable a greater allocation of resources to this issue by the Organization so that States can in turn offer greater protection.

Finally, it is of utmost importance that there be strict enforcement of codes of conduct for United Nations peacekeeping contingents and that there be zero tolerance in cases of sexual violence that might occur in peacekeeping missions. Only consistent commitment on the part of the international community will protect women and girls from sexual violence in armed conflict, which is rooted in the objectives and founding ideology of extremist groups, whose actions undermine the foundations of our civilization and represent a return to the most obscurantist and barbarous stages of history. We cannot allow it.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Kenya.

Ms. Grignon (Kenya): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this very important debate on women and peace and security during your presidency of the Security Council this month. The Kenyan delegation greatly appreciates this opportunity to share Kenya's experiences on the subject, and we thank you for the concept note (S/2015/243, annex). My delegation also expresses its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on this agenda item (S/2015/203), which, inter alia, showcases the key sectors where tangible progress has been made by countries. Kenya is particularly grateful that Member States are increasingly providing more robust gender and conflict analysis in their reporting. Please allow me to also appreciate and thank the panellists this morning for their inspiring statements.

Kenya is committed to the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) on women's participation in peacebuilding, better protection from human rights abuses and access to justice and services to eliminate discrimination. Kenya is a critical and central player in international peace and security, partly as a result of neighbouring countries that have witnessed some of the worst conflicts in the world. Kenya is also a key player in peacebuilding and peacekeeping and has been supporting and assisting its regional neighbours in reforming their security sectors and in reconstruction and recovery efforts after conflicts. These initiatives must genuinely involve and include women to ensure success.

In order to implement resolution 1325 (2000) at the regional level, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has developed an regional action plan for implementation of that resolution. Members of IGAD, including Kenya, have been using the regional action plan to reinforce their national framework to ensure that sexual violence is not used as a tool to terrorize communities in the region. Kenya, under the auspices of the National Gender and Equality Commission, has developed and adopted a national action plan to augment the regional action plan and strengthen its own national framework to implement resolution 1325 (2000).

Mrs. Kawar returned to the Chair.

In today's complex reality, asymmetric warfare is one of Africa's biggest challenges. Growing terror organizations like Al-Shabaab and Boko Haram are quickly spreading acts of terror that are paralysing the continent. Kenya is still mourning its children who were senselessly butchered by terrorists at Garissa University College. For us, the achievement of sustainable peace is urgent and cannot be achieved without women's full participation in the prevention of conflict and the protection of Kenyans. At this juncture, please allow me, on behalf of my delegation and of Kenya, to most profoundly and sincerely thank all and everyone here at the United Nations and beyond for their encouraging and touching messages of love, courage, support and solidarity during this trying time for Kenya.

Peace and security are the number one priority for Kenya, and everyone, especially women, are intricately involved. We still need to do more to ensure that women take centre stage in peace negotiations and peacebuilding institutions at all levels. We need to ensure that women have opportunities to access justice and to play their role in shaping policy and legislation to achieve and sustain peace and security. The Government of Kenya has formulated policies and enacted laws to ensure that women participate in peacebuilding at all levels. Women are also fully engaged at the highest levels of the executive, the judiciary and Parliament. In Parliament, women are responsible for championing laws and policies aimed at promoting women's involvement in peace and security issues and advocating for measures that protect women, children and the elderly.

At all other levels, women work in strategic positions of decision-making, which has greatly contributed to gender mainstreaming. The Constitution provides for women's participation and inclusion at all levels of Government in both appointive and elective positions. It also provides for policies that must guarantee sufficient budgeting allocations for women's issues and for gender budgeting. Local peace committees follow guidelines that are in tune with the Constitution. At operational levels, Kenyan women serve in the police and in the military, which is key to prevention and protection processes. Women are also being deployed in conflict zones to participate in peacekeeping and peace enforcement missions, just like their male counterparts.

My delegation wishes to underscore the importance of education, capacity-building and the communication tools for preventing and combating violence generally. It is in that connection that my delegation urges the Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission and other key stakeholders to continue prioritizing education and awareness-creation on the critical role of women in peacebuilding, peace and security. Issues of peace and security cannot be addressed in isolation. Women must have access to resources, entrepreneurial skills, including job creation and the ownership of property. We must emphasize a multi-pronged approach to the elimination of violence against women.

While the Security Council has an important role to play in dealing with peace and security matters, States bear the primary responsibility for protecting their citizens from violence. My delegation calls for more concerted efforts on the part of the international community and the United Nations system to support national efforts to prevent and address issues surrounding conflicts and violence, especially of a terrorist nature. Indeed, countries in conflict and those recently emerging from conflict have unique challenges and require everyone's goodwill to safeguard international peace. More resources and assistance are needed to ensure that where conflicts are raging, resources and support are sent with urgency to minimize suffering and to end the conflict. We must ensure greater coherence and coordination in addressing women's issues in a holistic manner in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Finally, my delegation will seek to engage further with Member States and stakeholders to further enhance and strengthen mechanisms to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In conclusion, I wish to reiterate Kenya's commitment to implementing resolution 1325 (2000).

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to say to the representative of Kenya that what happened in her country was the peak of barbarism and inhumanity. We stand with Kenya in this very difficult war.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ireland.

Mr. Mawe (Ireland): Ireland commends you, Madam President, for your initiative in scheduling today's debate. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, whose work we highly appreciate, and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin, speaking on behalf of civil society, for their insightful briefings on this topic.

Ireland associates itself with the statement made on behalf of the European Union.

The Secretary-General's report (S/2015/203) makes for difficult reading. It details horrible and systematic violations of the rights of women and girls and, to a lesser but discernibly growing extent, boys and men. The confluence of crises in 2014 wrought by violent extremism has brought home once again how sexual violence, rape, forced marriage and kidnapping are employed as tactics of terror by radical groups in Iraq, Somalia, Syria and Nigeria in order to dehumanize and repress their victims.

Nevertheless, 2014 saw some positive developments that are noteworthy. One highlight was the entry into force in December of the Arms Trade Treaty — the first treaty to recognize the links between the international arms trade and gender-based violence. We look forward to its effective implementation.

While the progress made must be commended, we cannot shy away from the reality that 2014 saw a resurgence of sexual violence in conflict. Faced with such horrors, how can we translate the concern voiced around this table into meaningful action on the ground? Today, I would like to focus on just three points: the deployment of women protection advisers, the better participation and empowerment of women in peacebuilding, and greater accountability for sexual violence in conflict.

The Secretary-General's report notes the real difference being made by the deployment of women protection advisers to United Nations missions. They have improved the quality of information and analysis received and have had a catalytic effect on the ground. However, of the 170,000 personnel deployed by the

United Nations, just 20 are women protection advisers. Ireland supports the accelerated deployment of such advisers, as well as gender advisers, to facilitate the full implementation of all women, peace and security resolutions. The number and roles of those positions must be systematically assessed during the planning and review of each United Nations mission, and the costs should be reflected in the regular budgets of United Nations missions.

As Ms. Allamin stressed earlier today, the full and equal participation of women in conflict prevention and peacebuilding is fundamental to any prevention and protection response, including to threats posed by violent extremism.

In line with Council resolution 2122 (2013), we must step up efforts to support women's leadership and participation. We must listen to, invest in and build up the capacity of women-led civil-society organizations. We need to eliminate legal and other barriers and proactively support the participation of women on an equal footing with men in economic and political decision-making, from the household to the national and international levels, in order to transform the social norms underlying gender inequality.

We know that peace agreements are more likely to succeed where civil society is included. And yet, in disregarding the role of women, we manage to omit a large segment of civil society. Women represent only 9 per cent of delegates to peace talks and 2 per cent of mediators, and this is in a context where more than half of peace efforts fail to sustain peace. There must be a better way.

Ireland also calls for the inclusion of the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in mediation efforts and in ceasefire and peace agreements. We are encouraged by the Havana peace talks on the Colombian situation, where a group of 60 survivors of sexual violence directly addressed the negotiations. As a result, the issue of conflict-related sexual violence has been raised in the negotiations by the stakeholders.

The Council has stressed on many occasions the importance of holding perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence accountable, not only as an end in itself but to address the culture of impunity which threatens peace and security and post-conflict recovery. We encourage the Council to use all means at its disposal to bring perpetrators into the spotlight, including through referrals to the International Criminal Court and mandating commissions of inquiry, and by explicitly condemning such violations where they occur. Targeted sanctions are another tool at the disposal of the Council, and the Council needs to be more ambitious in their use.

Ireland strongly supports the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report, as echoed by Ms. Bangura today, to fully integrate the issue of conflict-related sexual violence into the work of the Security Council sanctions Committees, including the Al-Qaida sanctions list, as part of designation criteria.

Sexual violence in conflict can no longer be considered collateral damage or something that is "unfortunate". It is the direct result of decisions taken by parties to conflict. The history of denial must end. We must incentivize national leaders to adopt the issue of women and peace and security as their own agenda. We must tackle the root causes of sexual violence. We must not stop until the barriers that exist for women are dismantled, so that they can claim their rights as equal citizens and contribute to peace and security on an equal basis.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): Thank you, Madam President, for convening this important debate. I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/203). It is appalling to note that the year under review was marked by an increased incidence and severity of conflict-related sexual violence. In this regard, we commend the unwavering commitment of Special Representative Bangura to expose and end conflict-related sexual violence.

Sexual violence is not merely a consequence of conflict. It is used as an instrument of war and, increasingly, as a tactic of terror. Its use by extremist groups and non-State actors is particularly alarming, not only in its increasing frequency but in its calculated and vicious intent.

Extremist groups and non-State actors terrorize communities into compliance, displacing populations and generating revenue through trafficking, slave trade and ransoms. The rise of extremist groups such as Boko Haram and Daesh, with their widespread reach across cultures and geographies, is aided by existing vulnerabilities within communities and systemic gender-based discrimination.

The United Nations and the international community more broadly must continue the work to integrate the women and peace and security agenda into counterterrorism and counter-insurgency efforts. That will require a better understanding of the possible options available to us and potentially different ways of operating.

Addressing sexual violence in conflict must remain a priority as long as women, men and children continue to be victims of sexual violence in conflict-related settings, and it needs to feature in every aspect of the Council's work.

Conflicts are more severe in situations where women are excluded and marginalized, and we have seen the tangible benefits of women protection advisers and women peacekeepers in the field. These must continue to be supported. The Council should continue to give its full support to the Special Representative, particularly on engagement with national authorities, armed forces and others. The signing by the Forces armées de la République démocratique du Congo of the declaration to combat rape in war is one concrete example of the important progress that can be made when there is sufficient political will. We commend the Special Representative for achieving this outcome.

Efforts to prevent sexual violence in conflict should also be considered in relation to all aspects of United Nations conflict-prevention, stabilization and peacebuilding work. This includes implementing the International Protocol on the Documentation and Investigation of Sexual Violence in Conflict and the comprehensive implementation of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court into domestic legislation.

More needs to be done to ensure that no individual can escape prosecution and act with impunity as well as to support human rights defenders and build the capacity of local civil society, including women's organizations.

The fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000) provides an important opportunity to expand the scope of the women and peace and security agenda beyond participation and protection to focus on prevention, including preventing sexual violence.

Australia strongly supports the Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict Initiative, of which Australia's Foreign Minister, Julie Bishop, is an active champion. We are working to implement the commitment made in London under the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict and will continue to work with partners in our region and beyond to promote universal application of the Declaration.

In conclusion, it is important to recall that men and boys also suffer from sexual violence; so, too, people with disabilities. These survivors often have different needs and require specific medical, psychosocial, legal and economic support services.

Ultimately, the international community must respond before conflict erupts to reduce exposure to conflict-related hardships and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence in all its forms.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the United Arab Emirates.

Mrs. Nusseibeh (United Arab Emirates): Thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate on conflict-related sexual violence and for choosing this important topic as part of your agenda. May I also congratulate you on your dynamic and effective presidency of the Security Council this month.

The United Arab Emirates joins others in thanking the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on conflict-related sexual violence, and the briefers this morning for their thoughtful and important presentations. The United Arab Emirates further lends its voice in commending the work done by Zainab Bangura in her tenure as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

It is of particular significance that we are convening this open debate under Jordan's presidency, as the Middle East faces a rising tide of extremism and unrest. In that light, we welcome Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura's upcoming mission to the Middle East, in the hope that her visit contributes to creating a region-wide strategy to address conflict-related sexual violence within the context of extremism. As ever, the United Arab Emirates stands ready to support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in this critical mission.

As we are confronted by distressing accounts of rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage by extremist groups, we must also recognize that some progress has been made in a relatively short period of time. It is remarkable to reflect that it was only eight years ago that the Security Council formally recognized the use of conflict-related sexual violence as a matter of international peace and security. The crime itself has been used as a weapon of war for centuries, but it was here, in this Chamber, that the international community created the mechanisms to help national authorities confront perpetrators and support the victims of these crimes. And it is here where further progress can and must be made.

Today, the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/203) takes us a step further as we move away from looking at conflict-related sexual violence as a tactic of war, to recognizing it as a tactic of terror. The report accurately pinpoints how sexual violence is deployed by extremist groups to achieve their heinous objectives. As such, it should be firmly dealt with under this rubric of terror. In this context, we fully endorse the Secretary-General's recommendation to integrate the issue of conflict-related sexual violence into the work of the relevant Security Council sanctions Committees, as part of the designation criteria for the imposition of targeted measures. We believe that the Security Council has a key role to play and should remain actively seized of this matter, in the interest of maintaining international peace and security.

As the Secretary-General noted in his report, the rise of non-State actors has made our landscape much more complex. We are navigating a newly shifting security context where the rise of violent extremism has led to increased and targeted violence against women and girls, men and boys. Extremist groups and non-State actors are using sexual violence to achieve tactical objectives and terrorize communities into compliance, displacing populations and generating revenue through trafficking, enslavement and ransom. We need to develop more creative and innovative solutions as part of a comprehensive strategy. While the international community develops its responses to counter these acts, we must at the same time develop preventive approaches to empower women as their own first line of defence. This includes promoting women's participation in the design and implementation of these programmes and supporting their leadership in local contexts. The education and empowerment of women are our strongest weapon against extremism and conflict-related sexual violence.

In the larger context of conflict, this agenda must be pursued comprehensively. A full-fledged response to combating conflict-related sexual violence will be possible only with the full implementation of the objectives outlined in 1325 (2000) in practice and not simply in theory. We must emphasize and ensure that women's agency and participation are an equal focus of this agenda in order to address its underlying causes.

As many have noted here today, accelerating the deployment of women protection advisers and gender advisers is key to addressing conflict-related sexual violence effectively. These differentiated roles are both of importance and must be given equal weight and resources. Let us commit to making the deployment of both gender and women protection advisers a key requirement of every mission.

Accountability for perpetrators is also fundamental to our global strategy. This should include individuals who commit, command or condone — by failing to prevent or punish — conflict-related sexual violence. We need to ensure comprehensive justice strategies in line with international humanitarian and human rights law, which includes providing survivors with the full array of support needed after a crime has been committed.

Our attention, however, should focus not only on the aftermath of these crimes, but also on preventing their occurrence in the first place. To this end, we would like to share specific recommendations arising from the panel discussion series convened by the United Arab Emirates in partnership with UN-Women and the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, in contribution to the global study on resolution 1325 (2000).

First, we are better armed and better equipped to respond to conflict-related sexual violence when we have accurate data. We welcome comprehensive reporting, investigation and documentation in order to bolster the United Nations ability to better fulfil its mandate, stressing the need for sex and age-disaggregated data. It is critical for the international community to deepen its information base on the nature, scope and objectives of sexual violence carried out within conflict in order to define appropriate interventions in consultation with women and affected communities.

Secondly, in peacekeeping operations it is critical that missions be able to predict emerging threats, react quickly and efficiently to instances of violence and understand community needs in their response. Digitizing early-warning mechanisms enables women and girls to protect themselves from conflict-related sexual violence. This requires cooperation among local communities and peacekeepers, as well as additional funding to expand the use of early warning tools as part of a preventive approach.

Thirdly, victims need to be able to safely and effectively report and document sexual assault in conflict zones.

In one recent mission, under the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mobile technology was utilized to allow civilians to register reports of violence directly to United Nations peacekeeping forces. This kind of reporting and documentation needs to be supported by the increasing presence of women protection advisers, who are deployed in peacekeeping operations to prevent and respond to conflict-related sexual violence.

Fourthly, crowd-sourced information can improve women's voice and agency in peace processes. Improving women's access to information and avenues through which they can share their views helps ensure that women are part of important discussions about political processes, peacemaking and community development as countries transition out of conflict.

All of these recommendations approach tackling this issue in new ways and building on utilizing the tools that have proven effective. We need to continually improve our methodology by using new technology to help us address this centuries-old crime.

It is the responsibility of the international community and national authorities to promote gender equality and empower women, not simply because it is the right thing to do, but because we know it leads to more stable and secure societies. As such, the United Nations remains the central forum for addressing this matter. Much progress has been made through the continual, concerted efforts of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Bangura, the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, among other United Nations entities.

To that end, last month the United Arab Emirates Government contributed $1 million to United Nations Action's multi-donor trust fund specifically to support the important work being undertaken by the Team of Experts in their efforts to build capacity on a national level in the rule of law and justice sectors. The United Arab Emirates stands with the United Nations and international partners in this important endeavour and hopes 2015 will be the year where we place the agency and participation of women and girls front and centre in our agenda. This is not only an issue of gender, but also a matter of international peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Costa Rica.

Mr. Mendoza-García (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica thanks the presidency of Jordan for convening this open debate. The recent trend of using sexual violence as a tactic of terror, described in the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/203), is a source of great concern for us because that abhorrent practice annihilates in the cruellest way possible social cohesion and the ties that bind communities, as well as dignity itself and the autonomy of victims.

As stated in the concept note (S/2015/243, annex), throughout history sexual violence has been widespread in armed conflict. Unfortunately, throughout history there are also many examples of various religions being used as justification in power struggles and the ideological background for conflict, and the domination and dehumanization of other human beings are justified merely on the basis of their being different. The irrationality of violence and hatred can rise to heights that put humankind to shame. The inability to see ourselves reflected in the other as human beings is an artificial construct derived from fanaticism that alienates us from our own humanity.

We have previously discussed the alarming expansion of restrictions on the rights of women and girls promoted by extremist groups, how the control of those rights is at the very core of the conflict and the emergence of terrorist acts specifically directed against them. Additionally, the report makes clear that sexual violence is intrinsically linked to ideology, strategic objectives and the funding of those groups. The phenomenon that today repels and alarms us is just one more element in the process of the radicalization of ideologies based on exclusion and which subordinates of women and girls. It is no coincidence that sexual violence takes place against a backdrop of structural gender-based discrimination. As the report points out, "the disempowerment of women that attends the rise of violent extremism is not incidental, but systemic" (*S/2015/203, para. 11*).

An appropriate response involves first not compromising with such world views. As underlined in the recommendations presented, in order to address the root causes of sexual violence we must promote gender equality and women's empowerment and transform the harmful social standards, particularly at the community level. Engagement with faith-based leaders and other opinion makers to counter unacceptable religious justifications for violence and reduce the stigma faced by victims is also essential.

It is also necessary for conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts to have a strong gender focus, including the consideration of sexual violence in negotiations and peace agreements. The approach in the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, including the work of the sanctions committees, should be revised in order to integrate gender issues and the question of sexual violence. Similarly, greater efforts should be made in order to prevent impunity, including the referral of cases to the International Criminal Court when necessary. It is also important to ensure, in the Organization's peacekeeping missions, the inclusion of stronger mandates in this area and the necessary provisions in their budgets to finance posts for gender and women protection adviser.

The United Nations represents the last glimmer of hope for many communities and we cannot fail at this crucial time in the victims' lives. Sexual exploitation and abuse committed by personnel of the Organization damage perceptions of the United Nations and its credibility, and prevent the implementation of mandates. We urge the departments responsible and countries that contribute troops, police and civilian personnel to abide strictly by the zero-tolerance policy. In that regard, we support the protection measures described in the report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (A/69/779) and proposals to enforce the prohibition of such conduct, contained in staff regulations.

On the twentieth anniversary of Beijing, the international community must send a strong message about the empowerment of women as a prerequisite for building lasting peace.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I give the floor to the observer of the Holy See.

Reverend Monsignor Grech (Holy See): My delegation wishes to express its gratitude for Jordan's presidency of the Security Council this month and for this open debate on sexual violence in armed conflict. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203), and commend the work of civil society representatives on this issue.

Women are not spared any of the brutal consequences of war, and are additionally subject to uniquely degrading and traumatizing attacks and long-term consequences. It is only just and reasonable that their voices should be present and influential in the work of preventing and resolving violence and war.

It is well documented that sexual violence of many kinds accompanies modern warfare. We all know the awful litany. Women are raped and trafficked, forced into prostitution to earn a living, and terrorized individually and in their roles as protectors of their children and other vulnerable family members. All violence against human life is terrible, but sexual violence is designed to debase, dehumanize and demoralize in a unique way. The consequences are profound and long-lasting, physical as well as psychological. The hatred and humiliation these crimes can provoke are deep and surely impede in powerful ways the achievement of the goals of peace and security for which this institution was created.

The recent year has been marked by new and ongoing atrocities involving sexual violence in various conflicts and by groups such as Boko Haram and the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. Some are also attacks upon women and girls purely because of the faith they profess. Although this is of very serious concern today for Christians, surely it is a matter where our shared human nature, across all religions and cultures, cries out for the common commitment of members of all faiths and Governments to strongly condemning and confronting such heinous acts and to stepping forward to protect those threatened.

It seems that, in the past several years, there has emerged a greater international consciousness of the scourge of human trafficking, and even increased response. It is to be hoped that there will be an ever greater appreciation of what Pope Francis has called the trauma, affecting the body and spirit, of rape as a tool of war. To adapt an observation made by His Holiness, a two-point drop in the stock market is front-page news, while the violation of hundreds or even thousands of women may go unreported.

My delegation supports those processes identified in successive reports issued by the Secretary-General as essential for ensuring justice to women assaulted in conflict, effective investigation and documentation, consistent and rigorous prosecution, and ongoing investigation and responsibility regarding the root causes of sexual and other violence in armed conflict. We support efforts to provide adequate legal, medical and social services to the particular women affected, to witnesses and survivors, and to their family members. Because of the Catholic Church's permanent local presence in the areas of the world most affected by disasters, a network of Catholic institutions and agencies responds rapidly and effectively to address the consequence of violence in armed conflict.

It is always distressing, however, to see that some are still promoting the abortion of unborn children as part of the treatment or response to attacks on their mothers. This contradicts the peace and security mission of the United Nations, and proposes meeting violence with more violence.

It has been observed many times on this organ, and it is true, that women are not only victims but also the necessary agents of and contributors to the work of preventing and resolving conflicts. Without their contributions, Governments, negotiators and civil society groups can neither understand the problems nor propose effective solutions. Moreover, it is important to continue in every Member State the steady and patient work of achieving structural justice for women in every sector of society. A proper vision of women's roles in society and the integration of women into every social sector are crucial aspects of violence prevention.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Morocco.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to address my congratulations to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on its accession to the presidency of the Security Council, and to congratulate you in particular, Madam, on being the first Arab woman to preside in this Chamber, of which we are very proud.

My delegation would like to thank you also for organizing today's debate and for choosing the theme of sexual violence in conflict, which is relevant not on account of both its gravity and its timing.

At all times and regardless of the victims, violence has always been condemned. But sexual violence in conflict is even more so. Women and children are often the first victims of conflict. They face destructive forms of sexual violence and are exploited systematically to achieve tactical, military or political objectives. They suffer the most devastating consequences of conflict and pay a heavy price because of their great vulnerability. Worse still, sexual violence has become a weapon of war used by terrorist and extremist groups such as Daesh, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab in Somalia, which we strongly condemn.

A year ago to day, 276 girls were abducted and taken captive by the terrorist group Boko Haram in Nigeria Despite the global outcry over their disappearance and the launch of the international mobilization "Bring back our girls" campaign, these kidnapped girls have not been found and their fate remains unknown. We express the hope today that they will not be forgotten and that this meeting will help keep their memory and sad and tragic fate at the forefront of the international community's priorities.

The report published by UNICEF on Monday, 13 April, indicates that 800,000 children have been displaced by the violence caused by Boko Haram. The March report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) reveals that 2014 was marked by deeply distressing reports of rape, sexual slavery and forced weddings perpetrated by extremist groups, sometimes in the framework of terror tactics. There has also been an increased use of sexual violence as a form of persecution, in particular against religious minorities, or to displace populations.

Women and children fleeing violence and fighting often find themselves once again exposed to the risk of sexual exploitation, rape, prostitution, or forced marriage, pregnancy or sterilization. Worse yet, they may also be auctioned and sold in slave markets. Rape is obviously the most common form of sexual violence in conflict, especially in camps for refugees and displaced persons, which offer, unfortunately, no security for women, especially single parents or heads of households. The majority of cases of sexual violence in conflict remain unreported for fear of threats, serious intimidation or reprisals, to which not only the victims who speak are exposed, but also witnesses, human rights defenders and anyone else who seeks to denounce this guilty silence.

Sexual violence and threats of such acts or incitements to commit them constitute a serious violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law and a very grave breach of the Geneva Conventions. Morocco strongly condemns all forms of sexual violence, including in times of conflict, and considers them to be barbaric, brutal and inhumane methods and practices, with serious consequences for the process of establishing lasting peace and reconciliation.

Prevention and the fight against sexual violence can be effective only through an approach that takes into account the complexity of the causes of the problem and the interests and needs of the people concerned. Firm measures must be taken urgently with regard to the accountability of all those who continue to act in defiance of standards of international law and civilian protection, especially in relation to women, young girls and children. It is also up to the parties to armed conflict to take every possible measure to ensure the protection of civilians and provide for their basic needs by according special attention to the needs of civilians who are particularly vulnerable, especially women and children, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law and human rights and refugee law.

Non-State armed groups undoubtedly constitute a major challenge due to their responsibility for most recent armed conflicts and their involvement in atrocities and massacres of civilians, in particular women. The international community must therefore respond and take appropriate measures to end these violations.

Women play a key role in repairing the social fabric of countries emerging from conflict. They must therefore participate fully, effectively and on an equal footing in all stages of peace processes. Their marginalization may delay or hinder the establishment of lasting peace, security and reconciliation.

Finally, national strategies to protect women and girls remain dependent on measures to strengthen the capacity of Governments and on the availability of material, financial and human resources to ensure their sustainability, empowerment and independence; hence the importance of a prompt and generous response to the Secretary-General's call in his report on donors to meet the funding requirements for the implementation of national action plans and national programmes, and in support of the initiatives of the United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Switzerland.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Madam President, Switzerland would like to thank you for organizing this open debate, even if its very holding is admission that we have all failed in our collective efforts to eradicate sexual violence against women. The recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203) is bleak testimony to this fact. It reports on rape, sexual slavery and forced marriage perpeatred mostly by armed groups, sometimes as a tactic of terror, especially in Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, Libya and Yemen. We previously heard examples of this in the past.

The many statements that we have heard today are undoubtedly important, but we must act and adjust our strategy in order to tackle this issue. In that regard, Switzerland would like to put forward three specific suggestions.

First, the examples that I have just given show that acts of sexual violence are often committed by non-State armed groups. To prevent such terrible acts, we must engage in dialogue with these actors, even if these are groups that we would rather not speak to. This dialogue, of course, must be led in a way that is adapted to each situation, but experience shows that it can help to reduce sexual violence if it is led competently. For example, the Swiss non-governmental organization Geneva Call has already been able to obtain specific, time-bound commitments from non-State armed actors to put an end to sexual violence and to comply more closely with humanitarian law and human rights law. Switzerland supports the activity of such organizations.

Secondly, we must strengthen the implementation of the Secretary-General's recommendations to prevent sexual violence with measures to fight extreme violence. Conflict-prevention measures must take gender specificities into account of course, and only the inclusion of women in the analysis of conflicts will enable States to design appropriate replies. We must also support civil society, particularly women's organizations, and ensure that they are included in a significant way in all preventive measures in ongoing peace processes.

Thirdly, Switzerland believes that security and justice institutions can have a decisive impact on conditions that promote an increase or a reduction in sexual violence. On 9 September, Switzerland will convene a meeting in Geneva on resolution 1325 (2000), at which we will take stock of innovative measures to address the root causes of gender-based violence on the women and peace and security agenda, including efforts to reform security and justice institutions. Our aim is to develop concrete recommendations to that end.

Finally, we commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, for her leadership and initiatives. We also thank her for her update on the efforts deployed by the United Nations system to date, including through the inter-agency network United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict. Switzerland stands ready to deploy experts within United Nations Action to support Governments in the development of comprehensive national strategies.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Croatia.

Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia): I thank the Jordanian presidency for convening this important debate on an issue to which Croatia attaches great importance.

Croatia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the observer of the European Union, and I shall make some brief, additional remarks in my national capacity.

In our view, taking action to prevent and redress conflict-related sexual violence is not only of fundamental importance to international peace and security, but also a moral duty and responsibility of Governments and citizens of the civilized world. However, the universal eradication of sexual violence in war and conflict is still far from being a reality. That is why we particularly welcome this debate as a contribution to keeping this issue high on the global agenda in our joint efforts to translate commitments into concrete and measurable actions.

Sexual violence has regrettably been used in all recent wars and conflicts, including in the former Yugoslavia, to achieve political and military aims, to terrify and humiliate opponents, to uproot communities and ethnic groups and thus to contribute to the collapse of entire societies for generations to come. Despite specific provisions prohibiting sexual violence in treaty and customary international law, as well as the political momentum and visibility gained in recent years, sexual violence in armed conflicts and other violent situations continues to spread around the world, with grave and devastating consequences for victims and their communities, as documented in this year's report of the Secretary General (S/2015/203). The present report also brings to light a new dimension of the issue, such as the use of sexual violence as a tactic of terror by extremist groups in Iraq, Syria, and Nigeria, as well as in a number of other environments.

The alarming trends we are witnessing underscore the need to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in order to address the root causes of conflict-related sexual violence, transform harmful social norms and counter the rise of extremism. It is well known that conflict-related sexual violence is not incidental, but inherently linked with ideology and strategic objectives, and widely used as a tactic of war, terror and intimidation.

Although women are widely recognized as effective agents of peace and security, and their empowerment can significantly contribute to economic growth, the number of women participating in decision-making processes in this sphere worldwide remains unacceptably low. Women are not present enough in post-conflict building processes either. In this regard, we give our full support to the deployment of women protection advisers alongside gender advisers in United Nations missions.

During the Croatian homeland war in the 1990s, women in Croatia suffered grave violations of their human rights, including maltreatment and rape, which was used as a tactic of war and an instrument of ethnic cleansing. We have seen the impact of such violations on their lives and their physical and mental health. Our own experiences teach us of the importance of adequately addressing conflict-related abuses of women's rights, including sexual violence, and of providing necessary assistance, health-care, psychological counselling and financial support to women. By introducing the Law on the Rights of Victims of Sexual Violence in the Homeland War, which is expected to take effect over the coming months, special status will be assigned to survivors, who will be entitled to additional psychosocial assistance, and to financial reparations for the abuse they have suffered. This Croatian law, developed in close cooperation and consultation with civil society organizations and victims, aims to ensure access to reparations regardless of the results of the criminal prosecution of perpetrators. Still, the punishment of perpetrators remains a priority for Croatia, and we firmly believe that impunity for conflict-related sexual crimes must be addressed without any hesitation.

The extensive war and post-conflict management experience that Croatia unfortunately gained on its own territory, including our experience in drafting our reparations law, can make an important contribution to broader global efforts in preventing and combating sexual violence in war and conflict. As a member of the group of global champions in the Preventing Sexual Violence Initiative, Croatia will spare no efforts to take on a more prominent role in preventing and combating sexual violence in war and conflicts, and to continue to give its firm support to all areas of the women, peace and security agenda. We see it as a gender-based peace agenda, which involves addressing the disproportionate effect of conflict on women and combating violence against women in conflict situations. It is also about women's empowerment, securing the full, equal and effective participation of women at all stages of the peace process, and giving them an equal role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, as well as in peacebuilding.

Our continued engagement rests on our firm belief that the full realization of women's rights is an indispensable basis for safeguarding basic human rights and achieving human security and lasting peace.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Nepal.

Mr. Bhattarai (Nepal): Allow me first to compliment you, Madam President, and to thank you for having organized today's important debate on women and peace and security under the Jordanian presidency this month. I also thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2015/203), as well as the Special Representative of Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Bangura, and Ms. Allamin, representing civil society, for their briefings this morning.

I had the honour to address the Council in October 2000 on how women were a source of strength in Nepal and around the world. As many studies had shown, women tended to be more sincere, more reliable and more compassionate. In particular, compared to men, they shunned violence more consistently and resolved disputes more peacefully. Women made more compassionate and, often, more effective leaders. Empowering women, bringing them into policymaking, and deploying them in the field as peacekeepers and peacemakers would add a more empathetic and humane dimension to our work, and provide us a more holistic frame with which to view conflicts.

In the 15 years since, all of this has been more than proved through experience, thanks to the Council's resolution 1325 (2000) and the subsequent resolutions on women and peace and security, which rightly emphasized the need to work concertedly to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, in particular sexual violence during and after conflicts, and doing all that is required to unleash their potential.

Over these years, Nepal has made steady advances at the national level in empowering women, including those affected by conflict. The Interim Constitution of Nepal provided for 33 per cent of women participation in elections at all levels, including in the Constituent Assembly. It also made it mandatory for women to comprise 33 per cent of the members of district level peace committees to address post-conflict issues at the local level.

Nepal continues to implement resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008) through a dedicated national plan of action. The first of its kind in South Asia, the plan intervenes in key areas, including participation, protection and prevention, promotion, relief and recovery, resource management, and monitoring and evaluation. An interministerial implementation committee coordinates its execution and a ministerial steering committee ensures its oversight. Encouraged by the continuing positive results, as also shown by the plan's 2014 mid-term monitoring report, the Government is making efforts to localize the plan to subnational levels.

Increasing the participation of women in decision-making, protecting women and girls from sexual and gender-based violence, and ending impunity have been our top priorities. Nepal has a zero-tolerance policy regarding gender-based violence. Violence against women and rape constitute serious criminal offences against the State. Polygamy, child marriage and enforced marriage are punishable by law. Perpetrators of human trafficking face severe punishment. A national action plan on gender-based violence has been in implementation since 2010.

As a committed and consistent major contributor of troops and police to United Nations peacekeeping for several decades, Nepal is determined to raise the number of women in the national security forces and to contribute more women to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Protecting women and girls from sexual violence, both during and after conflict, is at the core of the peacekeeping training of Nepal's security forces.

Nepal has recently set up a transitional justice mechanism that complies with its international obligations. Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission on Investigation of Disappeared Persons are mandated to look into the conflict-era cases, establish the truth surrounding such cases, bring the perpetrators to justice, address the needs of the victims, and ultimately pave the way for reconciliation, lasting peace and stability. It is an important step in our efforts towards seeking to provide justice to the victims of conflict in addition to the measures and mechanisms already in place. The Government is committed to bringing to book all perpetrators of serious violation of human rights, including conflict-related sexual violence.

I wish to conclude by reiterating that, as a State party to several core international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nepal's commitment to promoting and protecting human rights, especially those of women and girls, remains total and unflinching. We in Nepal are aware that much more remains to be done at the global, regional, national and subnational levels to realize the full potential of women in peace and security, and we pledge our readiness to work closely together and move forward as a responsible member of the international community in the interests of global peace and security.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Poland.

Mr. Winid (Poland): Let me thank you, Madam President, for convening today's debate. I also thank Ms. Zainab Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin of Nigeria for their statements.

Poland aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of the European Union. I would like to add some comments in my national capacity.

Poland attaches great importance to the topic of today's debate. On Monday, 13 April, the President of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which was adopted in Istanbul in 2011. I subscribe to the comment made earlier by the representative of Nepal on the role of women in United Nations peacekeeping operations, and in that regard I would like to congratulate Ethiopia, South Africa and Ghana on having the highest percentage of women peacekeepers. I would also like to express our respect to Jamaica and other Caribbean Community States for the prominent role they played in commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, with this year's thematic focus on women and slavery. We also commend the Department of Public Information for the exhibit at United Nations Headquarters, entitled "Women and slavery", which was part of the Remember Slavery Programme.

In the past, Poland was a victim of many foreign aggressions and suffered the consequences of violent conflict. In that respect, I would like to highlight the role of the heroic women who led with vision, dedication and courage, and stood up against aggression. One example of such a woman comes from the history of my own country, as well as that of a country rather far away from Poland — the island of Tonga. Queen Sālote of Tonga was the first foreign leader to officially oppose the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939. She and her action are a great example for us even now in the twenty-first century.

Nowadays, women continue to be the victims of conflict-related sexual violence across the world. The widespread occurrence of sexual violence in conflict is a threat to peace and security, and diminishes prospects for reconciliation and peacebuilding. Combating impunity and providing support for the victims are concrete duties that we must assume with respect to those who have suffered from sexual violence. We shall support the judiciary at the national and international levels, as well as those affected, through the Trust Fund for Victims, to which Poland is a proud contributor.

Although international organizations play a pivotal role in combating sexual violence in conflict, the primary responsibility to protect their nationals lies with States. In that context, the grass-roots approach is a must, and that includes changing behaviour patterns and teaching their citizens what is not acceptable under any circumstances. Unfortunately, in many countries there is resistance among victims with regard to reporting a crime due to the potential social stigma. Furthermore, a citizen must have confidence that the perpetrators of such acts will be held accountable by State authorities and, if necessary, that they will face consequences at the international level — namely, before the International Criminal Court. The International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda have played a historic role in the prosecution of wartime sexual violence.

As my colleague from the delegation of the European Union underlined earlier, we welcome the entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT). I appeal to all members of the Security Council to ratify this treaty. Without their support, the ATT will not have the impact it should have.

In conclusion, yesterday, 14 April, marked the first year since the abduction of Nigerian schoolgirls by Boko Haram. Despite the efforts of the national authorities and the international community, the fate of most of the girls remains unknown. That terrible crime, as well as others that we have witnessed in conflict-affected areas in Africa or the Middle East, call for our immediate action. We cannot leave them unpunished.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Slovenia.

Mr. Logar (Slovenia): Allow me to start by thanking Jordan for organizing this important debate, as well as Ms. Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Allamin, from the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, for their important briefings.

Slovenia aligns itself with the statement made by the observer of the European Union. I would like to make additional remarks in my national capacity.

Sexual violence is present in every conflict situation. It is a tactic of war and not just an incidental by-product or collateral damage of a conflict. We should bear in mind that rape and other forms of sexual violence constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity. Conflict-related sexual violence is also a security issue, not just a humanitarian or human rights issue.

Slovenia is deeply concerned by the findings of the latest report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (see S/2015/203). Violations perpetrated by State actors or associated armed groups remain of grave concern, although the majority of incidents of sexual violence are perpetrated by armed non-State actors. Slovenia joins others in condemning grave violations committed against women in armed conflict by armed non-State actors, such as the heinous acts perpetrated by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant/Daesh in Syria and Iraq, and Boko Haram in Nigeria and neighbouring States, as well as other such non-State actors in Somalia, Mali, Libya and Yemen. In that respect, let me reiterate that all perpetrators should be held accountable, and an end should be put to impunity in order to prevent and deter sexual violence.

The report of the Secretary-General also shows that 2014 was marked by sexual violence in the context of violent extremism. Extremist groups use sexual violence to achieve tactical objectives with the aim of terrorizing communities into compliance, displacing them from strategic areas and generating revenue through trafficking, the slave trade and ransoms. We are also deeply concerned by the increased risk of displaced or refugee women and girls to sexual exploitation, such as human trafficking, and early and forced marriages. States have the the primary responsibility to protect civilians from such crimes. They should therefore lead the efforts to prevent and end conflict-related sexual violence. At the same time, the international community should assist States in addressing these issues, including by investigating and prosecuting the perpetrators and others responsible for crimes, including United Nations and other peacekeeping personnel.

Although women represent the majority of victims in conflict-related sexual violence, this is not only a women's issue. Men and boys are also victims, particularly in detention. Sexual violence against them is used as a means of humiliation and, very often, as a means of torture. Allow me to draw attention to another finding in the Secretary-General's report. Sexual violence in conflict occurs where there is also systemic discrimination against women. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to promote efforts to eliminate discrimination in law and in practice in peace time, and to promote the participation of women in peace-related processes and activities, and in post-conflict rebuilding.

In conclusion, I would like emphasize that sexual violence presents an obstacle to peace and security. It hinders women from participating in peace and democratic processes and in post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. As a tool of war it can become a way of life. Once entrenched in the fabric of society, it lingers long after the ceasefire. Many women lose their health, livelihoods, partners, families and support networks as a result of rape. That in turn can shatter the structures that anchor community values and disrupt their transmission to future generations. That vicious circle must be stopped.

A year after the holding in London of the Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict, Slovenia will contribute to the agenda on sexual violence in conflict through a special event we are organizing under the title "Ending Sexual Violence in Conflict: One Year after the Summit", within the framework of an international conference, the Bled Strategic Forum, to be held later this year under the auspices of the President of the Republic. I invite all participants in today's debate to join us in Bled.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Indonesia.

Mr. Anshor (Indonesia): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for organizing today's open debate, which highlights the challenges we face in addressing sexual violence in conflict. We also appreciate this morning's briefings by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, in which they raised important points.

My delegation aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Viet Nam on behalf of the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

While we commend the efforts the Security Council has made so far to address sexual violence in armed conflict, there is a long and hard battle ahead if we are to put an end to such acts. The important work done on the ground to deter them must continue both during and in the aftermath of armed conflict. The voices of the survivors and those at risk matter. The populations at risk for sexual violence, as well as survivors of it, should have a channel for assistance in which national authorities and other national actors can play a role. We should focus on how to empower both sectors — the at-risk population and survivors — through collective community support and other means that develop resilience. They can take part in formulating preventive mechanisms, improving legal mechanisms aimed at dealing with such horrific crimes and devising protection, rehabilitation, repatriation and reintegration frameworks as well as legal mechanisms for survivors. Survivors themselves should be supported with multisectoral assistance, including in the areas of health care, psychological counselling, the law and livelihood support, while differentiated and appropriate responses should be made available for children and male survivors.

We need to constantly ask ourselves what can be done to promote a culture of peace, respect for the relevant international laws and zero tolerance for sexual violence in armed conflict. In his latest report (S/2015/203), the Secretary-General makes some good recommendations that we fully endorse and that merit the Council's consideration.

First, we should make use of the Council's monitoring of the security situation in conflict-affected countries to home in on the risk factors and warning signs for sexual violence. We should promote periodic field visits on conflict-related sexual violence and listen to the views of survivors, their families, affected communities and all relevant actors, including those from civil society and religious organizations.

Secondly, we should accelerate the deployment of both women protection advisers and gender advisers in priority settings and increase the deployment of women in peacekeeping operations. However, there must be an equal emphasis on quality. We need to ensure that advisers and peacekeepers are well equipped with the necessary resources and understanding, especially in relation to sexual violence in armed conflict.

Thirdly, we must create a safe and supportive environment so that survivors and their families, witnesses and community members are able to come forward without fear or stigma. All the parties involved should have a solid understanding of the cultural and local context. And adequate, timely funding is vital to ensuring that ceasefire and peace agreements comprehensively address and effectively implement conflict-related sexual violence, and that perpetrators do not get away with impunity.

Fourthly, since no cause or grievance can justify any act of terror, including conflict-related sexual violence, we must promote concerted efforts and a multi-pronged approach to countering narratives of violent extremism. In addition, we share the view that the Security Council should develop innovative and more aggressive approaches to dealing effectively with sexual violence perpetrated by non-State armed groups.

Indonesia has played an active role in United Nations peacebuilding efforts and has strengthened its contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations. We have female personnel in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, and we are committed to increasing the number of Indonesian female peacekeepers. Mandatory training for all peacekeeping personnel on addressing sexual violence should be continued and supported. Indonesia's peacekeeping centre has included training on that particular issue and will ensure that it continues.

But I would like to conclude by stressing that we should not overlook civilian expertise. The pool of civilian capacities can be broadened and deepened for peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict. It should include countries with relevant experience in post-conflict peacebuilding or democratic transitions, and particular attention should also be given to mobilizing capacities from developing countries and among women.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mrs. Pucarinho (Portugal): I would like to thank you, Madam President, for convening this open debate, and Ms. Zainab Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin of Nigeria for their very comprehensive presentations.

We welcome the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/203), which provides us with important information on the implementation of Security Council resolutions on monitoring and reporting arrangements designed to collect more consistent information on conflict-related violence, and which also contains very substantive recommendations on thematic and country-specific situations.

In recent years, the Council's resolutions have recognized sexual violence as a tactic of war and its potential for undermining peace and security. We know that much has been accomplished. Monitoring, analysis and reporting arrangements have been instituted in a number of conflict or post-conflict situations in order to collect more consistent information on conflict-related sexual violence. A list of parties to conflicts who are credibly suspected of committing sexual violence has been created and updated. Portugal appreciates those significant achievements. There can never be real security if women are not secure. However, while we recognize that with the adoption of various resolutions significant progress has been achieved and a strong normative framework established, enormous challenges still lie ahead, particularly owing to the changing nature of conflicts.

As several of the Council's resolutions have underlined, ending conflict-related sexual violence is crucial to improving international peace and security. Conflict-related sexual violence has been used as a tool of warfare in many armed conflicts around the globe, affecting women and men, girls and boys and societies as a whole. We note with concern, as the Secretary-General's report points out, that sexual violence continues to be used by extremist groups in several countries as a tactic of terror, forcing entire populations into submission or displacement. Moreover, conflict-related violence takes place against a backdrop of structural gender-based discrimination. To be truly effective, our fight against sexual violence should start by promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, in order to tackle the root causes of this frightful crime.

The Council should make full use of existing tools. For instance, it should guarantee the deployment in peacekeeping operations of women protection advisers and gender advisers, so as to strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence, and it should ensure that provisions on conflict-related violence are integrated into peace and ceasefire agreements. Despite the fact that women are the largest group of victims of sexual violence, they should not be viewed merely as victims. When it comes to conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts, they represent a powerful but still largely neglected group. The increased participation and empowerment of women in these areas are crucial to sustainable peace and security, as set forth in resolution 1325 (2000) and other related resolutions.

Sexual violence in conflict remains prevalent, yet it also remains widely underreported. Those who come forward and report such crimes are often burdened with threats and stigma. We underline the need to take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of survivors, witnesses, humanitarian workers, medical staff, human rights defenders and journalists who collect information on sexual violence and actually do help survivors.

Conflict-related sexual violence is prohibited under international law, under specific provisions of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, and under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

Yet too often, sexual violence in conflicts is regarded as an unavoidable consequence of the breakdown of law and order. This culture of impunity must end. The issue of impunity must be addressed, and Portugal, in this regard, believes the International Criminal Court plays a fundamental deterrent role, complementary to the role of tribunals at national and international levels, by holding perpetrators accountable and investigating and prosecuting those responsible for sexual violence, turning it into a liability for armed groups by exposing their leaders to international scrutiny and pressure.

We must act to bring the perpetrators of sexual violence to justice, but also to bring justice and adequate care to the survivors and victims of such a terrible crime. We can do this by lifting barriers to women's access to justice, establishing complaint and reporting mechanisms, providing support to victims and making health care accessible and affordable to them.

Sexual violence is simply not tolerable. To end it, strong messages by the international community are certainly important, but in practice only genuine will and effective means can make a real difference in ending this crime.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 15 States members of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Let me at the outset congratulate Jordan on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council and express our great appreciation for the President's personal leadership in conducting the business of the Council, particularly in today's open debate. I would also like to express our appreciation to today's briefers for their valuable contributions to the discussion on women and peace and security in the context of conflict-related sexual violence.

SADC wishes to associate itself with the statement delivered by Ambassador Téte António on behalf of the African Union (AU).

In recent years, the world has witnessed a multiplicity of conflicts leading to an unprecedented increase in the scale of violence against women and girls. There is growing recognition that newly emerging unconventional conflicts associated with the proliferation of militias, armed groups, terrorism and violent extremism have had a disproportionate impact on women and children. Conflicts have had devastating consequences for women, including heightened risk for human trafficking, sexual violence, forced and early marriages as well as lack of access to basic services.

The Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203) describes the year 2014 as a one marked by harrowing accounts of sexual violence in the context of violent extremism. It details how terrorists use sexual violence to achieve tactical objectives, dispelling the notion that sexual violence is a by-product of conflict.

This month marks the first anniversary of the kidnapping by Boko Haram of more than 200 young girls from their school in Chibok in northern Nigeria. SADC condemns this barbaric act and stands together with the Government and the people of Nigeria and the international community in calling for their safe return.

The international community has recognized that women's participation is vital to achieving sustainable peace. In this regard, in the year 2000 the Security Council laid the foundation for the women and peace and security agenda in the landmark resolution 1325 (2000) and other subsequent supporting resolutions. Other key reference points include the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

As we mark the fifteenth anniversary of resolution 1325 (2000), SADC recognizes that significant steps have been taken to address the plight of women and girls to improve international, regional and national responses to their protection. However, we wish to underscore that States have the primary responsibility to protect women and girls from all forms of gender-based discrimination and abuse, which are often aggravated in conflict situations. While international cooperation and assistance are important, they should not replace the central role of the State in the protection of women and girls.

SADC's programmes on women and peace and security are guided by the region's commitment to women's rights. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, signed in 2008, encompasses commitments made in all regional, global and continental instruments for achieving gender equality. Articles 20 and 25 of the Protocol provide for the implementation of a variety of strategies including enhancing, reviewing, reforming and enforcing laws aimed at eliminating all forms of gender-based violence and trafficking.

At the continental level, tremendous efforts have been made to ensure the adoption of laws, policies and programmes to safeguard gender equality and women's empowerment. The AU's five-year Gender, Peace and Security Programme, launched on 2 June 2014, is designed to serve as a framework for the development of strategies and mechanisms for women's increased participation in the promotion of peace and security. The African Union is working closely with the Office of the United Nations Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict to translate this framework into a plan of action containing indicators and directives for implementation that will guide member States in implementing resolution 1325 (2000).

The AU Special Envoy on Women, Peace and Security, Ms. Bineta Diop, is mandated to lead the AU efforts to promote women's roles in preventing conflict and peacebuilding. At the twenty-fourth AU Summit, held in Addis Ababa in January, the year 2015 was declared the Year of Women's Empowerment and Development, in recognition of the vital role of women in Africa's development. We recognize that economic empowerment also reduces women's vulnerability to violations of their rights.

While considerable progress has been achieved in establishing the legal and normative framework on women and peace and security, implementation remains a challenge. SADC is concerned about continued gross abuses, sexual exploitation and the abduction of women in areas of conflict. We urge the international community to collectively respond effectively to violations of women's rights in a holistic manner. This entails addressing the root causes of conflicts and strengthening national capacities for peace and reconciliation.

In order to address sexual violence against women in time of conflict and in post-conflict situations, we have to work on preventive measures during peacetime. Gender mainstreaming is a critical factor, as is putting laws in place that protect women against abuse and violations of their rights. Equally important is ensuring that perpetrators of violence against women and girls are held accountable.

We need to intensify efforts to address the plight of women and girls in conflict situations to ensure their effective participation in development. The high-level review of resolution 1325 (2000) in October will provide an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved and what challenges still lie ahead.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm SADC's commitment and support to the women and peace and security agenda.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Qatar.

Ms. Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): First of all, I would like to thank the Security Council, under the presidency of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, for convening this important debate. In particular, I would like to congratulate you, Madam President, on being the first Arab woman to preside over the Council. I also thank Ms. Zainab Bangura, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their important statements.

Fifteen years have passed since the Council's historic adoption of resolution 1325 (2000), which has led to many achievements in enhancing the role of women in the field of peace and security. Indeed, women play a singular role in conflict resolution, combatting extremism, peacebuilding and providing options for establishing stability, democracy, prosperity and peace. Peace cannot be achieved when women are marginalized and excluded from political life. There is no doubt that our meeting today will allow us to build on those efforts. We very much wish to see the adoption of tangible conclusions during the high-level review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). That will be an important moment to step up States' efforts to confront the relevant challenges and concerns.

It is with great interest that we take note of the Secretary-General's report on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203). It paints a very grim picture of the situation in 2014 in terms of abuses, rapes, sexual slavery and forced marriages perpetrated by parties to conflict, including extremist groups. These are tools used to sow terror and terrorism. We are very concerned by the report's description of sexual violence as a phenomenon that is not isolated, but rather intrinsically linked to the strategic goals of extremist groups, as well as to their ideology and funding. It is used as a tactic to sow terror and draw civilian populations into conflict.

Despite the fact that acts such as sexual slavery and sexual violence are considered to be international crimes, women and girls remain the vast majority of the victims of armed conflict, especially when they are displaced or refugees. They are the victims of aggression, sexual violence and human trafficking, which is very troubling. The parties responsible for such horrific acts, whether Governments or non-State actors, still go unpunished. This is why we agree with the recommendations contained in the report regarding the need for the Council to use all tools at its disposal to guarantee accountability, bringing the perpetrators to international justice and preventing impunity.

The conflicts taking place in different parts of the world — and the instability in the Arab world in particular — have caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians, who were terrorized and the victims of all kinds of rights violations, including sexual violence. We therefore highlight the need to reiterate Governments' responsibility to protect civilians by taking measures pursuant to international law, implementing a zero-tolerance policy for the perpetrators of these crimes, providing assistance to survivors and strictly applying laws on the protection of women from violence, especially sexual violence in situations of conflict.

We reiterate Qatar's commitment to guaranteeing gender equality and guaranteeing the rights of women during conflict and in post-conflict situations. To that end, and insofar as sexual violence in conflict situations constitutes a humanitarian emergency, we welcome the joint mechanism between UN-Women and the joint rapid response unit on sexual and gender-based violence in situations of conflict.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I would like to thank Jordan for convening this important debate, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zainab Hawa Bangura and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin for their statements, and the Secretary-General for his recent report (S/2015/203) on conflict-related sexual violence.

Today we have heard in depth about the horrific prevalence of sexual violence in conflict all over the world. Ms. Allamin and others' heart-wrenching accounts have demonstrated the crippling effect of sexual violence on women's ability to lead healthy and productive lives, on their psychological, emotional and physical well-being and on their families and communities. It is alarming, as the Secretary-General notes in his report, that violence against women has become a systematic pattern in conflict zones, and that the suffering of women everywhere is being multiplied by the unprecedented increase in violence and a new wave of extremism around the world.

In Afghanistan, almost 40 years of war, terrorism and violent extremism have created deep fissures in the very fabric of our society, shredded human relationships, restricted access to services and justice and undermined the State's capacity to protect its citizens. Women have been the biggest victims of the conflict, and their suffering has been compounded by a culture of discrimination against women. Today, the Taliban and other extremists continue to use sexual violence as a tool not only to pursue their destructive ends and their campaign of terror and fear, but also to weaken communities, the rule of law and long-established traditional values.

We recognize the need to hold all perpetrators of violence against women to account, no matter where they come from or with which group they are affiliated. A few weeks ago, my country was appalled to see young men commit egregious violence against an innocent woman, Farkhunda, who was beaten and then burned in one of the most brutal and inhuman killings in our history. Farkhunda's name has become a powerful symbol of the plight of Afghan women, and her story has moved the whole society to demand an end to violence against women, once and for all.

The national unity Government of Afghanistan is committed to ensuring the elimination of violence against women by strengthening our justice system and reinforcing and implementing legal frameworks that guarantee human, religious and constitutional rights for all Afghan citizens. As President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai has said,

> "There is no point talking about how much we respect women's honour, if we let rape go unpunished or allow harassment in our streets".

Afghanistan is party to global conventions to end violence against women and has launched a women, peace and security national action plan. Since 2009, the Government has worked to implement the law on the elimination of violence against women, which criminalizes 22 types of violence against women and establishes specific punitive measures for perpetrators. The Government of Afghanistan has also drafted national regulations on the prevention of sexual harassment, and in November 2014 launched the first-ever gender-based violence treatment protocol for the health sector in Afghanistan.

Those steps are important, but ultimately combating sexual violence in Afghanistan will require a paradigm shift in the way that our society treats women. In that regard, President Ghani Ahmadzai has called for a mental and cultural revolution across Afghan society. This requires women to play an active role in the social, economic and political life of the country, as well as commitments to educate Afghan girls. Civil society, particularly the Ulema, and human rights and women's rights activists, are central to efforts to raise awareness of women's rights and to build a foundation of collective action against the evils of violence, terror and extremism.

Today's debate compels us not only to bear witness to the societies suffering from violence and conflict, and the women who have survived the horrors of sexual violence; it also compels us to work together, as an international community representing the conscience of the world, to ensure that even when the flames of war are still burning, women and men and all citizens can live in dignity and peace.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea): It is great to see you again, Madam, and to see you as the President of the Council for the month of April. We appreciate your convening of this important debate.

While we address the issue of sexual violence committed by States and non-State actors in conflicts today, we have a new disturbing trend to discuss, namely, the use of sexual violence by extremist groups as a tactic of war. The report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence (S/2015/203) alerts us to the fact that sexual violence is not incidental, but integrally linked with the strategic objectives of extremist groups. Exploiting sexual violence to terrorize and displace people should never be acceptable. Against that backdrop, my delegation would like to stress the following points.

First, we would like to stress the critical role of each Member State. A sovereign State should be the first to act to protect the most vulnerable people under its jurisdiction. The vast majority of cases of sexual violence are perpetrated by non-State actors; is is therefore crucial that the international community induce non-State actors to abstain from sexual violence in compliance with the norms of international humanitarian law. A firm stance against sexual violence will enhance the legitimacy of the State that discharges the primary responsibility for the protection of its people.

Secondly, we support the Council's full integration of conflict-related sexual violence elements into the work of its relevant sanctions committees as part of the designation criteria for targeted sanctions. In order to facilitate the full implementation of resolutions related to women and peace and security, we also support the accelerated deployment of gender advisers and the integration of Department of Peacekeeping Operations/ Department of Field Support training materials into missions' pre-deployment training.

Thirdly, multidimensional programmes to assist national authorities in seeking accountability should be put to full use. The Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict mandated by resolution 1888 (2009), and the Justice Rapid Response mechanism, among others, need to be utilized further.

Last but not least, we believe that the myth that sexual violence is an inherent, unfortunate aspect of conflict should be dispelled. Such perceptions have allowed what we are witnessing to persist and even worsen. Promoting gender equality and empowering women will be the most effective strategy in the prevention of such crimes and the protection of women in conflict. Ushering in the fifteenth anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), we look forward to another milestone in our collective effort towards progress.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Netherlands.

Mr. Van der Vliet (Netherlands): The Kingdom of the Netherlands welcomes this debate, as well as the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/203). I appreciate the opportunity to make additional national remarks, as I align myself with the general statement made by the observer of the European Union. Also I would like to reiterate my country's commitment to the fight against conflict-related sexual violence across the world.

I would also like to applaud the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual

Violence in Conflict, Ms. Zainab Bangura, United Nations Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict and the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict for their efforts worldwide, both as advocates and through their expert support.

With violent extremism on the rise, the report of the Secretary-General rightly draws our attention to the disturbing trend of sexual violence as a tactic of terror. The mass-scale violence against Yazidi girls and, exactly one year ago, against the Chibok school girls are two horrific examples of the specific targeting of women and girls by extremist groups.

Violent extremism leads to the systematic disempowerment of women. It is part of the objectives, ideology and funding of extremist groups. All of that is taking place while a couple of doors away, down the hallway in this very building, we are negotiating, in good faith, a sustainable development agenda that includes a strong goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It is those efforts — our efforts and our determination — that must prevail.

Sexual violence is pervasive in conflict and post-conflict situations and reflective of a broader and unequal gender relations dynamic in those societies. It is not a stand-alone problem that can be solved in isolation. What is needed is a fully integrated approach that addresses deeply rooted gender inequalities, that is context-specific and that works to empower women.

The Netherlands strives to do exactly that. We approach the issue of sexual violence in conflict from several angles, using various concrete instruments of foreign policy at our disposal. For instance, in our civilian and military contributions to multilateral missions — most recently to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Mission in Mali — attention to the issue of gender inequalities and sexual violence in conflict is an integral part of our national preparation. Both our police and military officers who are now in Mali received predeployment training on gender, human rights and international humanitarian law. Together with our valued partner, Spain, we also offer regular training for other countries on gender in operations to professionals from the military, the police and the diplomatic community, as well as to civilian experts and activists. Recently, we launched a specialized pilot training, together with UN-Women, for female military officers. This training is meant to increase the number and capacity of female peacekeepers.

Deploying women protection advisers and gender advisers is another way to ensure the full implementation of the resolutions on women and peace and security. We make available such civilian expertise on gender and combating sexual violence to United Nations missions. In the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, we support the deployment of a senior women protection adviser, and I am glad that Ms. Van Deuren is present here today at our debate. The more structural inclusion of women protection advisers and gender advisers in peacekeeping budgets is an issue that requires further consideration.

Through our programme flow, funding leadership opportunities for women, we support women's rights organizations around the globe, and our National Action Plan 1325 comes with an annual fund for civil society programming in support of women's political participation and leadership. We contribute to several United Nations Trust Funds, including the United Nations Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women

In situations where the justice sector is ill-functioning, survivors who have gone through the trauma of an attack too often face additional risks, such as rejection by their families and communities, double victimization by State authorities, limited health services, including a lack of access to safe abortion and psychosocial support, and many other risks. They should not go through this ordeal in getting the justice and assistance they need and deserve. The perpetrators of sexual violence, whether State or non-State actors, should be brought to justice and held accountable. There can be no justice or accountability in situations where the stigma and shame associated with sexual violence remain with the victim rather than the perpetrator. Equally, there can be no justice or accountability in situations where women and young girls are abducted, enslaved and traded openly, while these horrific acts are justified by extremist groups on the grounds of religion.

There is no religion or culture that commands or justifies these evil acts. Therefore, we need to fight ideologies or propaganda by non-State actors that advocate sexual violence against women and girls and that want to deny the rights of freedoms of citizens, particularly those of women. There is also a clear role for the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other tribunals. The Netherlands very much commends the broad jurisdiction of the ICC on the issue of conflict-related sexual violence.

We should not think of women and girls only as victims. We know about the resilience of many survivors. We also know that empowered women who participate in decision-making and take up leadership roles can make a real difference. Many brave women are actively resisting the influence and rule of extremist groups in Syria and Iraq. We believe in the power of these women as agents for peace and justice and as representatives of communities living in conflict, and we work actively to support them.

In conclusion, if we are serious about realizing the sustainable development goals, including achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, then we must put an end to conflict-related sexual violence everywhere and forever.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Rwanda.

Mr. Nduhungirehe (Rwanda): Madam President, let me join others in thanking you for organizing this important open debate. I also thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and Ms. Hamsatu Allamin of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their respective statements earlier today.

In recent years, the international community, especially the Security Council, has quite rightly directed considerable energy to the fight against sexual and gender-based violence. Unfortunately, as we gather here today, one year has passed since the kidnapping of 276 girls from a school in the Nigerian town of Chibok. Today, of the many terrifying stories emerging from Daesh-occupied Iraq and Syria, the violence directed towards women is perhaps the most difficult to contemplate. Last month, the United Nations estimated that Daesh had forced some 1,500 women, girls and boys into sexual slavery, which is unacceptable. In the same vein, we also remain in solidarity with the affected families of the victims of the recent attacks at Garissa University College in Kenya, a majority of whom were women.

All these crimes, like many others, present a particularly egregious example of the use of sexual violence in terrorist activities, and are testimony to the fact that conflict-related sexual violence is one of the most urgent challenges for affected Governments and communities, and a serious threat to international peace and security. While the leadership and responsibility of the affected Governments is critical to tackling this issue, with the support of the international community, we believe that the focus should now be on our collective efforts to convert the political commitments into concrete prevention on the ground.

Rwanda once again condemns all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide, especially in conflict and post-conflict zones. We believe that, as previously stated in this Council, sexual violence in conflict should now be qualified as sexual terrorism. Now that sexual violence has also spilled over into countries that are not in conflict, clarifications should be established in regard to measures deployed both in conflict and non-conflict situations. In conflict zones, we believe that the protection of women and girls should be given priority by ensuring that we take full measures, in particular to provide more effective protection to the civilian population at risk, create the conditions for humanitarian assistance that remains hampered, increase female peacekeepers and gender-protection advisers in all United Nations missions, and conduct investigations on violations and abuses by all parties.

We should all send a unified message to remind those responsible that acts of sexual violence cannot be tolerated. Perpetrators must face justice, and the culture of impunity enjoyed by some non-State actors should be shattered. Some of the groups enjoying impunity are those that committed these types of atrocities during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and continue such practices today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the name of Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR).

On this particular issue, it is regrettable to see that, as Rwanda commemorates the genocide against the Tutsi for the twenty-first time, the international community, which was quick to neutralize other armed groups in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, has turned a blind eye to their heinous activities and continues to offer them a soft landing. If this trend continues, not only the FDLR's sexual violence campaigns, but also its destabilizing tactics, will have long-lasting, devastating impacts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region.

In a non-conflict situation, we believe that national security and justice institutions should strengthen their response in addressing sexual violence, including awareness-raising and education, strengthen their security institutions to detect acts of terror, and make their border control measures more effective, among other things. Furthermore, ending impunity for those who commit sexual violence should be our collective effort and goal. In the same line, we believe that the Security Council should ensure that all country-specific reports and mandate renewals evaluate the level of protection and promotion of women's human rights, as enumerated in several Council resolutions. We call on the established United Nations Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict to support national institutions in discharging their duties.

I shall conclude by recalling that defeating sexual violence in conflict should include addressing the root causes of conflicts, as well as creating institutions that fulfil their constitutional duties. Moreover, a successful reform of the rule of law in conflict-stricken countries will largely depend on the smooth demobilization of the various militias run by war lords. With that being said, let me pay tribute to the commitment of the Secretary-General and his tireless Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict for their actions and achievements in fighting sexual violence in conflict.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of El Salvador.

Ms. González López (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): El Salvador is grateful for the organization of this open debate on sexual violence in conflict, and we are pleased that a woman is presiding over this debate. We thank the Secretary-General for his annual report (S/2015/203) on this important theme. We recognize the tireless work and leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and we urge her to keep up her efforts, in which she will undoubtedly require the support of the whole international community.

El Salvador expresses its satisfaction with the achievements of certain countries seeking to confront sexual violence in conflict through the implementation of specific laws, the prosecution of perpetrators and the provision of compensation to victims. We agree with the Secretary-General that the countries that have shown such good progress should share their best practices with other countries affected by conflict. However, we would like to voice our concern about the documented trends of the use of sexual violence as a form of persecution involving the forced displacement of populations, sexual violence against adolescents, the ideological opposition of certain groups to the education of girls and attacks against persons on the basis of their sexual orientation, real or perceived, as a form of social control and the continuation by various groups of the practice of repression by using women and girls as arms of war.

Allow me to indicate that the Government of El Salvador recognizes the important role played by women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peacebuilding, pursuant to resolution 1325 (2000). We think, therefore, that it is vital to focus on the situation of violence experienced by women, identifying it as an important aspect in our public policies. Permit me to point out that in 2013 the El Salvador Institute for Female Development carried out a project called "The memory of the fireflies" with female survivors and family members of the victims of the massacres that occurred in my country in December 1981. As part of the project, an anthropological study was carried out to compile testimony from women and to provide them with psychosocial assistance in safe environments where they could talk about their experiences. At the same time, we intend to highlight the knowledge of those events based on their vital experiences in order to preserve a memory in the form of an oral history. Through it we want to promote a process of reparation, focusing not just on civil redress and compensation, but also on highlighting the experiences of the women. We have also defined as one of our priorities for a five-year development plan for 2014-2019 institution-building and specialized strategies for guaranteeing the rights of women.

I am pleased to announce that El Salvador has made efforts at the governmental level, with the help of friendly countries and international organizations, to create a State national committee for the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) and subsequent resolutions adopted on the topic of women and peace and security. Members of the committee were sworn in on 12 November 2014, and the committee includes representatives of 19 governmental organizations, public ministries, academia and civil society. Their main goal is to propose policies and standards aimed at ensuring compliance with the resolutions on the subject and to ensure the greater representation of women at all levels of decision-making within national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms with the goal of strengthening the prevention and resolution of conflict.

Finally, in August, El Salvador will hold, with other members of the secretariat of the Central American Integration System, the first regional training workshop on resolution 1325 (2000) in order to ensure that as many countries as possible in the region can commit to drawing up national action plans leading to the true implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), adapting its substance to the various security contexts that countries are currently experiencing. It is in our interest to share our experiences, since thus far we are the only country in the region that has a national follow-up committee on that theme at the highest level.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Ms. Rahimova (Azerbaijan): I wish to thank you, Madam President, for convening today's open debate on women and peace and security with a focus on sexual violence in conflict. Our appreciation also goes to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security for their insightful statements.

In the context of armed conflict, parties should ensure respect for the obligation under international humanitarian and human-rights law to protect innocent civilians, especially women and girls, who continue to suffer from rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy and other forms of sexual violence. The continued practice of using gender-based violence as a tactic of war is legally and morally unacceptable. Azerbaijan reiterates its strong condemnation of all acts of sexual violence committed against women and girls in situations of armed conflict. There can be no tolerance for such acts, and all necessary measures must be taken to bring the perpetrators to justice and put an end to impunity. We note in that regard the efforts of the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which was established pursuant to resolution 1888 (2009), aimed at strengthening the capacity of national actors with regard to the rule of law and justice.

Unfortunately, not all grave violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including acts of sexual violence, have received due attention and a response at the international and regional levels. Measures that are more resolute and targeted are now required to end impunity in such situations. Commitments to protection efforts must be free of selectivity and politically motivated approaches and preferences. In that regard, we note the role played by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict pursuant to her mandate. The involvement of women in peace and security should be seen as one of the central elements that can support conflict prevention and underpin long-term stability. We look forward to the 2015 high-level review in October and the outcomes of the global study on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). In that regard, Azerbaijan appreciates the work of UN-Women and its professional team and stands ready to contribute to the review process.

At the national level, Azerbaijan has launched regional projects, such as Women for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in the Southern Caucasus, aimed at strengthening advocacy work calling for strengthening the role of women in decision-making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution at the national, regional and international levels. Such initiatives can be instrumental to the promotion of a culture of peace and cooperation among interested actors.

Azerbaijan remains committed to the implementation of the resolutions on the subject and is pleased to have made a contribution to the work of the Council during its presidency in October 2013, including the adoption of resolution 2122 (2013). We look forward to the high-level review on implementation and cooperation with interested States, UN-Women and other relevant entities in the process of the preparation of the global study.

In conclusion, I would like once again to commend the delegation of Jordan for convening this important open debate.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Ukraine.

Mr. Yaremenko (Ukraine): Ukraine associates itself with the statement made this morning by the delegation of the European Union.

My delegation attaches particular importance to the issue of women and peace and security, and thanks you, Madam President, for convening this debate, as well as today's briefers for their useful insights into this important topic.

Resolution 1325 (2000), adopted 15 years ago, established the basis for the women and peace and security agenda, called for special protection and the full and equal participation of women in all conflict-prevention, conflict-resolution and post-conflict-peacebuilding efforts. The resolution has proved to be an effective instrument for Member States to implement their policies in this important area. Ukraine remains fully committed to the implementation of the resolution and actively supports international efforts aimed at addressing the full range of human rights violations and abuses faced by women in armed-conflict and post-conflict situations.

In Ukraine, a national action plan in line with resolution 1325 (2000) is being developed by the Government, in close consultation with the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as well as civil society. We expect that document to be adopted in 2015. My delegation also looks forward to the global review of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in 2015, which will provide additional impetus to fulfilling our common commitments on women and peace and security.

Ukraine is alarmed at the fact that civilians still constitute the majority of casualties in armed conflicts worldwide. Many of them are women and girls, and their number keeps growing dramatically. We are deeply worried over the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women.

In my country, terrorist groups armed, financed and supported by the Russian Federation continue to operate openly in some areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions. Further ignoring the calls of the international community, the Russian Federation keeps intensifying its interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine by stirring up separatism, exporting terrorism, inciting ethnic tensions and provoking violent confrontations in the eastern regions. Clearly, none of those actions would have been possible without the involvement of the Russian authorities.

Civilians, including women and children, continue to die from Russian bullets and shells. In its recent report, the United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine found that, from mid-April 2014 to 15 February 2015, at least 5,665 people, including at least 375 women and 63 children, were killed and at least 13,961, including at least 630 women and 159 children, wounded as a result of the Russia-provoked conflict in Donbas.

According to the latest official statistics, the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine stands at 1,198,000. About two thirds of adult IDPs are women. The Government fully understands their specific needs, as most IDP families include elderly and unaccompanied women with children. The law of Ukraine on IDPs adopted on 20 October 2014 was welcomed by the international community, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. This law is aimed at ensuring the rights and freedoms of IDPs, including women, and at addressing key issues in this area, inter alia through facilitating humanitarian assistance. On 5 March, Ukraine's legislation on IDPs was amended in order to strengthen their social protection, including through addressing the issue of unemployment.

I would like to draw the Council's attention to the fact of the abduction and illegal transfer of Ukrainian nationals from the territory of Ukraine into the Russian Federation for so-called criminal prosecutions. A political prisoner — member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Nadiya Savchenko — is still being detained in Russia without legal grounds and despite the fact that, under the Minsk arrangements, all hostages and illegally detained persons must be released. We demand that Nadiya Savchenko be immediately released and those involved in her abduction and illegal detention be brought to justice.

The Government of Ukraine is undertaking a number of targeted steps in order to address the challenges that the ongoing foreign aggression places on women in Ukraine. In parallel with the elaboration of the national action plan on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000), my Government will continue to ensure the greater participation of women in political, economic and social life.

Making full use of the knowledge, skills and experience of Ukrainian women is vital to reaching a solution to the current crisis in and around Ukraine. We encourage the United Nations, in particular UN-Women, to actively contribute to that end.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina.

Mrs. Perceval (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Madam President, we would like to thank you for the initiative of convening this debate and for the concept note (S/2015/243, annex) that you circulated to inspire our commitment and our thinking on this issue. I should like also to thank Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, for her statement. Every day we are grateful for her consistency, commitment, courage and honesty. We would also like to thank the representative of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, who shared with us this morning her experiences and her desire to fight injustice and impunity.

The issue of conflict-related sexual violence is part and parcel of Argentina's State policy. That policy aims to protect and promote human rights; ensure that there are full reparations for victims; protect, promote and ensure equal conditions and opportunities for, and treatment of, women in all areas; and fulfil the commitment to eliminate all forms of discrimination, xenophobia and racism, as well as the commitment to not countenance impunity but, rather, to work with truth, memory and justice to ensure that development, human rights and peace can go hand in hand.

International law is of fundamental importance in this respect, because therein lie the appropriate mechanisms to ensure that when a State cannot or does not want to protect human rights, we have the tools at our disposal to do so. International law is in our hands with these mechanisms, so we can listen to the victims and ensure that violations of human rights do not go unpunished.

In that context, Argentina strongly supports the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict aimed at eliminating all forms of sexual violence, in particular against women and children in the context of armed conflicts, post-conflict situations and the actions of violent extremist groups. We welcome the report (S/2015/203) prepared by the Office of the Special Representative and fully agree and adopt its recommendations. We recognize that sexual violence is used as a tactic of war and terror. It is therefore necessary to coordinate efforts to address such crimes in armed conflicts and prevent violent extremism.

We support the report's recommendations with regard to including sexual violence in the work of the sanctions committees. The referral to the International Criminal Court of cases in which crimes of sexual violence in conflict have been committed is a substantive part of the Rome Statute. We support the provision of multidimensional support to survivors, including sexual and reproductive health services. We support the provision of mulidimensional assistance to victims for their effective reintegration. We support engaging in dialogue with all stakeholders — State actors, non-State actors and civil society, including religious leaders. We support eliminating the stigmatization of survivors and providing protection, prevention and support to families and communities. We encourage the deployment of women in peacekeeping operations and including in the specific training of all that participate in peacekeeping operations content and practices respectful of human rights and women and children's rights and making it clear that sexual violence in conflicts is a war crime and a violation of human rights.

Similarly, we want to recognize that yesterday was the first anniversary in Argentina of the coming into force of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. We deposited that instrument at the United Nations, and a few days ago the brotherly nation of Chile did as as well. I also recognize with great respect the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflicts, Ms. Zerrougui. My country calls upon other States to ratify the third Optional Protocol. Today there are only 34 States that have signed it, and only two current members of the Council have ratified it. Doing so would set an example, since the Council is making progress on substantive resolutions on the protection of the human rights of women and children and the protection of civilians and the condemnation and erradication of sexual violence in conflicts. Since we know that the majority of victims are women and children, it would be good if all United Nations States Members, not just Council members, could sign the third Optional Protocol.

Argentina strongly supports, both when we are members of the Council and when we are not, the Council's tasks and we recognize the various resolutions that have been adopted. However, the recent and increasing sexual crimes that have been perpetrated by extremist violent groups, as well as by States that enjoy impunity, as a strategy to terrorize, intimidate and stigmatize specific groups — women, children, the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender population, refugees and displaced persons, people of different faiths and religions — constitute some of the most serious international crimes.

From the perspective of human rights, protection from crimes of sexual violence perpetrated in conflicts as a tactic or strategy of war, terror, intimidation or stigmatization and the prevention of those crimes must remain our priority. We must therefore continue to insist on this matter. Very often, because of having become accustomed or desensitized to these abhorrent crimes, victims themselves do not see what they have suffered as violations of their human rights and dignity. But they are war crimes and human rights violations.

In conclusion, as an elderly Spanish lady said — she was 88 years old at the time — from the collective of the women of 1936,

> "to think that the clock is ticking fast and every day we tear off another page from the calendar, we cannot wait for next year."

Why do I mention this? Not because I always like to quote poets, but sometimes they speak more plainly than politicians or diplomats. When Enriqueta wrote that, we all knew what she was saying. Do not rip another page off the calendar until the victims have been provided with reparations. We call for an end be put to the slowness in providing reparations to the victims and to prevent conflict-related sexual violence. It seems that we may not have been alert when reading that in a given country 48 women per day are subject to sexual violence. We should awaken to our great commitment and desire for a better world.

In my country, which suffered from State terrorism during a bloody civil-military dictatorship, the women who were victims of that dictatorship also had to learn what it meant for their human rights to be violated, including when it came to their bodies. In Susana Chiarotti's *Grietas en el Silencio*, a recent book compiling testimonies of women who were subjected to sexual violence during the civil-military dictatorship — and this is something that people at first either did not know or did not want to talk about — a victim of sexual violence recounts,

> "If you tell me that this is a violation of my human rights because it is sexual violence, and is so defined as a crime in the Rome Statute, then, yes, I was abused. When I was arrested they put the barrel of a gun in my vagina. They took away my six-month-old baby while I was nursing. They licked milk off me, saying it was the milk my baby would be having if they themselves were not taking it."

At the end of the day, we are what we do in order to change what we are. Those are not my words, but I mention them in homage to the poet Eduardo Galeano, who died yesterday and who was the writer of *The Open Veins of Latin America*.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the representative of Argentina for her very eloquent conclusion, which speaks to us all.

The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): If I may, I would like to comment on the statement made by the representative of Ukraine. The theme of today's meeting was conflict-related sexual violence. I do not recall hearing those words in his statement, which we believe is a clear example of abusing the forum of the Security Council.

That once again shows that those colleagues are not so interested in the theme of the meeting, but rather they wanted a pretext to set out a whole string of accusations against Russia. The accusations do not change, and we have repeatedly commented and responded, including on the issue of Ms. Savchenko, which again has nothing to do with today's theme of sexual violence in conflict.

If we are going to speak of the real problems of women living in the south-east of Ukraine, then today their problems are above all due to the blockade of the region by the Kyiv authorities. In Donetsk and Luhansk there is therefore a lack of food and medicine. Social benefits are not being paid out and the most urgent services are not being provided. However, our colleagues preferred not to mention that.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of Ukraine has asked for the floor to make a further statement. I now give him the floor.

Mr. Yaremenko (Ukraine): If I am not mistaken, the topic of today's debate is women and peace and security. With all due respect, I am quite sure that Ukrainian women, including the female peacekeeper, Nadiya Savchenko, are included in today's discussion.

Moreover, for more than a year now, Russian diplomats have stayed true to their own words:

> "According to Goebbels, 'The more improbable the lie, the faster people believe it.' And it worked out; he was a talented man."

Those words were spoken by none other than Vladimir Putin, President of the Russian Federation, on 9 July 2014, when he received a delegation of rabbis from Israel, Austria, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and France. Incidentally, the quotation is still on the presidential website. I checked it an hour ago.

Ukraine is fully committed to the provisions of the Minsk agreements. Nevertheless, I must stress that Ukrainian forces ceased fire as of midnight on 5 February 2015 and that they have consistently abided by the ceasefire since then. At the same time, in clear and flagrant breach of the Minsk agreements of September 2014 and February 2015, illegal armed groups, with direct support from Russian regular forces, did not cease fire as of 15 February. They undertook a massive assault on Debaltseve. On 18 and 19 February, some 2,500 Ukrainian troops retreated from the town. That blatant violation of the Minsk agreements cost the lives of 19 Ukrainian servicemen, with more than 135 wounded and 159 captured, while 12 went missing. Yet the militants continued to shell the positions of the Ukrainian forces, as well as civilian locations, and undertook infantry and tank attacks aimed at squeezing the Ukrainian forces from certain positions. Overall, since 15 February, Russian-backed militants have shelled Ukrainian positions more than 1,970 times, killing 86 Ukrainian soldiers and wounding 460.

Russia and Russian-backed militants must immediately cease fire and take all the necessary measures to ensure that the ceasefire is sustainable. Russia must stop manipulating and deliberately distorting the facts based on false information.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Zagaynov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The second statement by the representative of Ukraine proved once again that he does not understand the subject of today's debate. It is not Ukraine and not the situation in Ukraine.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a further statement in my national capacity as the representative of Jordan.

I would like to refer to certain allegations by the representative of Syria with respect to Syrian refugee camps in neighbouring States such as Jordan. Since the beginning of the crisis, Jordan has stood by its brothers in their humanitarian tragedy, receiving huge numbers of them and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions. The reference to the refugee camps by the representative of Syria insults United Nations efforts. Those camps were established in Jordan, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian United Nations agencies. Jordan is a State of law and institutions. We respect the human rights of all people, including women. We are committed to providing assistance to Syrian refugees who were forced to flee their country, particularly women and children, in line with international criteria. The comments made and the Secretary-General's report (S/2015/203) demonstrate the gross violations against women in Syria.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.